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WHY PREACH CHRIST?

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WHY PREACH CHRIST?

A PLEA FOR THE HOLY MINISTRY

Being the William Belden Noble Lectures delivered in Harvard University, 1928

BY

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THE WILLIAM BELDEN NOBLE LECTURES

This Lectureship was constituted a perpetual foundation in Harvard University in 1898, as a memorial to the late William Belden Noble of Washington, D. C. (Harvard, 1885). The deed of gift provides that the lectures shall be not less than six in number, that they shall be delivered annually, and, if convenient, in the Phillips Brooks House, during the season of Advent. Each lecturer shall have ample notice of his appointment, and the publication of each course of lectures is required. The purpose of the Lectureship will be further seen in the following citation from the Deed of Gift by which it was established:

THE WILLIAM BELDEN NOBLE LECTURES

"The object of the founder of the Lectures is to continue the mission of William Belden Noble, whose supreme desire it was to extend the influence of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; to make known the meaning of the words of Jesus, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' In accordance with the large interpretation of the Influence of Jesus by the late Phillips Brooks, with whose religious teaching he in whose memory the Lectures are established and also the founder of the Lectures were in deep sympathy, it is intended that the scope of the Lectures shall be as wide as the highest interests of humanity. With this end in view,—the perfection of the spiritual man and the consecration by the spirit of Jesus of every department of human character, thought, and activity, —the Lectures may include philosophy, literature, art, poetry, the natural sciences, political economy, sociology, ethics, history, both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as theology and the more direct interests of the religious life. Beyond a sympathy with the purpose of the Lectures, as thus defined, no restriction is placed upon the lecturer."

PREFACE

The terms of the Foundation of the William Belden Noble Lectures call for an annual "presentation of the personality of Jesus, as given in the New Testament, or unfolded in the history of the Christian Church, or illustrated in the inward experience of His followers, or as the inspiration to Christian missions . . . in the hope of arousing in young men, and primarily in the students of Harvard University the joy of service for Christ and humanity, especially in the ministry of the Christian Church."

In keeping with this Commission, the writer of the Noble Lectures for 1928 asks men of goodwill to give themselves to the work of commending Jesus—basing his appeal on the services rendered to religion by Jesus' personality and achievements; on the unique character of the ethic which proceeds and draws its motive force from Him; on the unique fellowship into which His followers are drawn; and on the purpose and range of His present influence in the world.

G. A. J. R.

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WHY PREACH CHRIST?

I

WHY INTRODUCE MEN TO JESUS?

I CHOOSE for the title of these lectures the question: "Why Preach Christ?"

The phrase "Preaching Christ" possesses whatever merit attaches to antiquity: it was one of the earliest descriptions of the work of spreading what we now call Christianity. The phrase has the further merit of being in accord with what I take to be my commission under the Noble Foundation. In the document embodying the terms of the Foundation, I find these words: "The founder has in view the presentation of the personality of Jesus, as given in the New Testament, or unfolded in the history of the Christian Church, or illustrated in the inward experience of His followers, or as the inspiration to Christian Missions for the conversion of the world. It is the desire of the founder that the lecturer for each year shall be himself animated by the further motive which inspires this foundation, the hope of arousing in young men, and primarily in the students of Harvard University, the joy of service for Christ and humanity, especially in the ministry of the Christian Church." Keeping this commission in mind, I propose to endeavor to show that the work of "Preaching Christ" is a life-task worthy of

the best efforts in learning and in self-discipline of the best equipped men in this or any university.

On the threshold, I shall have to come to terms with the word "preach." That word has come to mean the performance, in churches, of an exercise most distasteful to many sensitive men; the delivery, in the course of public worship, of set discourses predetermined by custom in the matter of frequency, duration, temperature and (within narrow limits) even of form.

Now for this practice (for the existence of which in the primitive church there is I believe no decisive evidence) I must decline here to hold any brief. Against it there have been, and will continue to be, earnest and even passionate revolts. Bishop Brooks in his lectures on preaching protested against the idea that a sermon is a work of art, or that it possesses any essential type or form. Every attempt to consider the sermon as a work of art, he said, "works injury to the purpose for which the sermon was created." "Art knows nothing of the tumultuous eagerness of earnest purpose."

Now it is true that the Bishop's view has not found general acceptance, and indeed is hard to reconcile with statements of his own, warning preachers against the "fascination of spontaneousness." Dr. Oswald Dykes believes that the Bishop's mistake springs from confounding "a work of pure art, which exists for its own sake alone, with that artistic perfection which applied art may confer on a useful object." "The sermon,"

he goes on, "certainly is not a product of 'pure art.' It serves undoubtedly a 'further purpose.' So does a Greek vase. Its purpose is the homely one of holding liquor. Yet on it the artist can lavish the utmost grace of outline and the loveliest design. Such is the art of the preacher." It will probably be felt that Dr. Dykes answers Dr. Brooks effectively; but the point here to be noted is the fact of the protest against formal discourses of set pattern, made by one of the greatest preachers of all time.

From the academic point of view a more serious protest was made by the late Dr. Edwin Hatch in the Hibbert Lectures for 1888, which bore the title of "The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usage upon the Christian Church." In a chapter on "Greek and Christian Rhetoric" in which a fascinating account is given of the popular methods of the later Greek philosophers, Dr. Hatch says this of Christianity's encounter with Hellenism: "Christianity came into the educated world in the simple dress of a Prophet of Righteousness. It won that world by the stern reality of its life, by the subtle bonds of its brotherhood, by its divine message of consolation and hope. Around it thronged the race of eloquent talkers who persuaded it to change its dress and to assimilate its language to their own. It seemed thereby to win a speedier and complete victory. But it purchased conquest at the price of reality. With that its progress stopped. There has been an element of

sophistry in it ever since; and so far as in any age that element has been dominant, so far has the progress of Christianity been arrested.... But if Christianity is to be again the power that it was in its earliest ages, it must renounce its costly purchase. A class of rhetorical chemists would be thought of only to be ridiculed; a class of rhetorical religionists is only less anomalous because we are accustomed to it. The hope of Christianity is that the class which was artificially created may ultimately disappear; and that the sophistical element in Christianity will melt, as a transient mist, before the preaching of the prophets of the ages to come who, like the prophets of the ages that are long gone by, will speak only 'as the Spirit gives them utterance'."

The significance of that devastating passage is not, I think, the touch of impatience and exaggeration in it, but the fact that it answers to a cry that has often gone up from the heart of a Christian preacher when, chafed by the hardness of his monotonous work and yet on fire with some Christian thought, he has passionately wished that he might be allowed to give his people *just that thought alone*, without shredding it out to (or compressing it within) the expected limits and form of a set sermon. A group of Chinese students (not students of theology) once did me the honor to confer with me on certain changes which they proposed to introduce in the organization of the Christian Church in China. "We are determined,"

they said, "to put a stop to the absurd practice of static preaching, of preaching formal discourses every Sunday morning until preacher and hearers drop dead."

There has been then, you see, a revolt alike on the part of the great preacher, the great scholar, the ordinary preacher and the man in the pew against the tyranny of formal discourses; a revolt serious in that it has been made in the interest of spiritual freedom.

I have no doubt that there is much to be said against the revolt. I believe, for example, that the answer to Dr. Hatch is essentially this: It lay in the counsels of the providence of God that the Christian impulse and the Christian Gospel should travel forth from its Semitic birthplace into the Hellenic world. By following that movement the Christian message encountered many difficulties and perhaps suffered some permanent disabilities. But it is a dangerous thing to say that the increasing complication of life is not a disciplinary instrument of the Supreme. As a matter of fact, each decade presents to man problems of an increasingly difficult kind and it is a dangerous thing, menacing the valuable thought that God is at work in history, to say that for simplicity's sake we must "renounce" certain elements in our heritage and "put the clock back." If Hebraism gave to our religion its substance and the fire of heart to proclaim it, Hellenism gave it its forms, the flexible speech which its full and orderly

expression demanded. In the name, then, of the God of History, who is One, we must surely claim a place in Christian preaching for disciplined and controlled order in thought and speech, which we associate rather with Greece than with Israel. A like consideration is probably the answer that hushes the passionate protest by the ordinary minister against the encumbering hardness of established forms. The "Prophets," said Saint Paul, "can control their own prophetic spirits:" and the history of religion, especially of religious excesses, makes clear that it is usually well to restrain and retard the expression of a Christian idea until it has been seen and set in its relation to cognate Christian ideas. As a matter of fact, our hold upon ourselves in conversing upon the highest subjects in the presence of others, especially in public gatherings, is never firm enough to justify our setting out with the idea that the sermon may safely be a loose and extemporaneous address. "The more ardent a man is, and the greater power he has of affecting his hearers, so much the more will he need self-control and sustained recollection and feel the advantage of committing himself, as it were, to the custody of his previous intention instead of yielding to any chance current of thought which rushes upon him in the midst of his preaching."[1]

It will be seen, then, that I am no enemy of the orderly oral discourse. But I am not willing to be understood as committed to a defence of it when

[1] Cardinal Newman: "University preaching."

I commend in these lectures the "preaching" of Christ. I do not know what is to be the future of ordered preaching. I can see that there has been a great deal too much of it; that religious stimulation by exhortation has been hugely overdone, especially in America; that a great deal of very successful Christian progress has been effected without it, as in the church before A.D. 325, and as in certain sections of the Christian Church outside Western Europe and America.[1]

I can see that the incompetent preacher must go, as the incompetent singer has largely gone, thank God, out of social life. But I feel sure that there will always be a place in Christian service, both for the rarer spirit who is equipped to maintain week after week the formal sermon, which has been described as "the intelligent and correct monologue of a cultivated and practised speaker when he is addressing a friend on a more than usually serious subject;" room, I say, both for this rare and highly endowed man, and also for the man who, though no orator, yet burns to share with his friends the best he has found in religion, if not out of sheer interest in God or in ideas about God, at

[1] Dr. Percy Dearmer reminds us that "the predominance of the sermon has been a local and shortlived affair; it has existed in Northwestern Europe for less than three centuries only; in the rest of Western Europe the sermon has always been subordinate and not essential; in the Eastern Churches it has been almost unknown." He even goes so far as to add: "The weakening of the sermon need not cause alarm, for the sermon has not been in Christian history the normal center of church going. Indeed the predominance of the sermon has coincided with the decline of church going."

least out of interest in the highest welfare of these his friends.

By "Preaching Christ," then, I mean no less and no more than working to make Christ known and welcomed and beloved and adored and followed and trusted by one's fellow men.

And now to turn to the second word in my title "Preaching Christ." If one wishes to commend religion, why begin by advertising an historical personage? "I think," said Jowett of Balliol, after reading the *De Imitatione Christi*, "that it is impossible and contrary to human nature that we should be able to concentrate our thought on a person scarcely known to us, who lived 1800 years ago." That note of Jowett is taken from his private notebook and is carelessly expressed. But the weakest point in it is surely the phrase "contrary to human nature." If it is contrary to human nature to concentrate its thought, i.e. its religious thought, upon a person who lived long ago, how comes it that of the eleven living religions of the world "only two have had no personal founder," and that the religions of the most gifted races of mankind have their roots in the religious experience of half a dozen persons? The three greatest religions of the earth, which cover the faith of two-thirds of the human race, were founded by Gautama, Jesus and Muhammad. The truth is that the first step in the building up of a religion is neither the framing of a

theology, nor the thinking out of a philosophy, but *the groping for the hand of a friend.* There is in the average man[1] a consciousness of incompleteness, of inadequacy in the face of destiny, so overwhelming that he finds it difficult to believe that others are as nakedly incompetent as he is to face the Powers that surround life. He therefore looks in trembling hope to someone believed to be more experienced than he is himself, more in the counsels of the hidden Powers than he; and that one becomes his guide, his interpreter, his mediator, in religion. There are of course possibilities of disaster in this tendency amongst men to entrust themselves to one felt to be their superior in religious knowledge and accomplishment; but the instinct itself is sound, resting on a fidelity to the facts of personal inadequacy, which is the very promise of growth. "Our age," says Glover, "is not the first to discover the value to ordinary people of a great man. The names of Socrates and Zeno haunt the discourses of that day. 'Place before yourself what Socrates or Zeno would have done in such circumstances,' said Epictetus. 'Though you are not yet a Socrates, you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates.' Others gave a similar advice. 'Do everything as if Epictetus saw.' So old and so natural is the use men make of other men who

[1] I do not here speak of the academic person beset with illusions of self-sufficiency. I have not hitherto had the honor of the acquaintance of any academic group in which the approach to religion through Jesus was not deprecated and in which devotion to Him was not despised.

have been victorious in life; so much more profitable is history than theory." Of course the final justification of this attitude of trust is to be found in the qualifications of the person trusted, in his fitness to be the "fellow-worker with each man in the realization of his supreme destiny" and "the universal centre of gravitation for all souls."

Now this is precisely what I venture to claim for Jesus of Nazareth. I do not ask that at this stage we shall "theologize" about Him; but only that we consider whether He be not indeed the best guide we can select in the matter of right living and in the matter of religion.

I. To begin with, consider His background. All of us who are familiar with ecclesiastical tradition have made the acquaintance of an intellectual vice which flourished exceedingly during the reign of certain types of theology and which, curiously enough, the modern spirit has not quite been able to eradicate—the vice of detaching Jesus from His background and presenting Him to men, as it were, hung between heaven and earth, separate from history. That intellectual vice has been the fruitful mother of false sentiment, superstition, unhealthy subjectivism and irritated infidelity. We must renounce this vice if we are to enter the realm of reality in religion. If we are to understand the ground on which intelligent men today, with their eyes open to all the difficulties of the problem, do nevertheless place unique reliance

on Jesus in their religion, we must share their impression of the significance of His religious heritage.

Jesus of Nazareth, then, was an Asiatic, as all founders of all the great religions of the world have been, for it is a significant and chastening thought that no religion founded in Europe, Africa or the Americas has survived. Jesus was a Palestinian Jew: a member of that Asiatic race whom we know so well as fellow-citizens and understand so little—a race singularly exhaustless in vitality, singularly gifted, and infected by a strange fever, a hot passion of religion which St. Paul calls a "zeal of God." The zeal is neither missionary in its aim, nor speculative in its intellectual forms, nor even always moral in content, but it has always been passionate.[1] The beginnings of organized religion among this people seem to have been, as elsewhere, humble and crude. Yet the plain and undeniable fact is, that after many centuries of varied national discipline they came to outdistance in religious thought all the other peoples of the earth.

In particular there are four deposits of their experience that have been of inestimable value to mankind.

1. First of all, the truth which Canon Streeter calls a "master simplification"—the truth of the

[1] It is not for us morally piebald Christians to make much capital of contempt out of this fact. If the mystical has sometimes outstripped the ethical in the Semite, he is not in this without his counterpart among us Gentiles.

unity of God. This truth, that behind the variety of the world without us as well as the world within us there is one sovereign power, has been hard for mankind to attain and just as hard to retain. Science and philosophy appear to demand it, yet both are plagued by difficulties regarding it. Jewish thought was of a practical sort. It did not speculate on the existence of God; it professed to find Him in actual operation. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like me." The problem of the personality or impersonality of this Power is not discussed in Jewish religious literature: what is exhibited, however, is "a presentation of God and man and of the relations between God and men always on the level of personal life." All that we can discover of anything approaching definition is the assertion, in many forms, of the belief that this God is Spirit: that is to say, not that He is ghost but that He is not to be identified with, confined within, nor regarded as fully set forth by the natural world. He has that world as a sphere of action, it is true, and "the Hebrews had a much broader idea of the range of the action of the Spirit of God than is the case in our current religion." But His actions have the intimacy, the freedom and yet the limitations of the world of spirit. It means further that He mean sto be known by spiritual processes: that is to say, by action in which reason, heart and the moral will combine; by intelligent operations of conscience; by honest moral in-

tentions. And further still it means that man's knowledge of God is not static: God is always more than men know Him to be.

For (and here is the core of Israel's contribution to religion) this God has a character. From the nature of the case that character cannot be exhaustively defined: there is over all our thought of it a Vast Ineffable Remainder, suggested but not defined by the so heavy-laden Hebrew conception of Holiness. "God appears," says Professor Hocking, "as a being in whom opposite traits are strangely united: but the nature of the Centre in which such oppositions agree or are neutralized is not picturable—is known, if at all, only by immediate experience." But so far as what one may call the hither side of the character of God is concerned, Hebrew thought was bold to see in it both justice and mercy, a certain invincible solicitude for men and yet a certain distinctness and freedom from man, an inexorable righteousness. Hebrew thought before Jesus made, as far as I know, no effort to harmonize these two aspects of the character predicated of Deity—that task was left for a later solution. But at least the two aspects—the inexorably self-consistent righteousness and the solicitous lovingkindness—were fairly and evenly presented to the world. He Himself is made by one of His prophets dramatically to say, "A just God and Savior: there is none beside me."

2. The second gift of Israel to the world's

religious thought is a direct corollary of this conception of the Supreme, as alike aloof from the earth in august holiness and yet deeply committed to a saving companionship with men. He is thought of as having a *purpose* for men and nations, and history is the outspreading of the beginnings of that purpose.

Learned men have spoken stimulatingly, as I cannot do, of the logical connection between personality and purpose: of the contrast in this matter between Hebraism with its strong, practical, unspeculative (anthropomorphic, if you will) view of God entering into personal relations with peoples and individuals and entertaining beneficent designs for them—of the contrast between this and Indian religious thought, which has neither stressed personality in God, nor has any illumining sense of history. All I can do, all I am anxious to recall is this: I am trying in these lectures to commend the Christian, which is an historical religion: and I ask you to note that this historical religion has its roots and inheritance from an older religion with a very definite philosophy of history as bearing in it the purposeful action of the Supreme.

3. Once more, the religion of Israel was distinguished by the *type of character* which it came to produce—a type of character essentially distinct from that which was characteristic of the best among ethnic peoples: the saint as over against the sage or hero. Sainthood, however, is a term

which must not be made to carry more than it actually did carry. The ideal man in Hebraism, was the direct product of Israel's thought of God: he was the godly man: not the godlike, but the man constantly impressed by, and formed by the thought of the overarching and indwelling power of God. He was essentially the derivative man, the debtor to Divine grace: even the redeemed man, forgiven, restored to Divine favour, and living in conscious dependence on that favour. There are a hundred ways in which, in terms of permissible variants in experience, he may be described: but the derivative, the *dependent*, the *devoted*—that is what is essential to the type.

It is not often enough emphasized that this religious type of excellence is a special gift of Hebraism to the world: for it has elements in it (as for example in the absence from its devotional life of anything approaching a merging of individuality in deity) that differentiate it entirely from the type of "holy man" furnished to the world by India's religious life.

4. Lastly, Hebraism has given to the world the unique spectacle of a people that has learned its interpretation of life through life itself, has "suffered its way into truth," first experiencing national and personal crises in discipline, and then, through unique reflection on these experiences, arriving at the possession of truth which has proved to be of inestimable value to the peoples of the earth. "In Israel," says Robertson Smith,

"truth once attained was never lost and never thrust aside so as to lose its influence: but in spite of all impediments, the knowledge of God given to Israel moved steadily forward till at last it emancipated itself from national restrictions, and without changing its consistency or denying its former history, merged in the perfect religion of Christ which still satisfies the deepest spiritual needs of mankind."

And this world-conquering truth was gained, not by speculation or dialectic, not by deduction from abstract ideas, but by reflection on actual experience. In estimating Jesus, in approaching the figure of one who many believe was in His life a revelation of God, it is always to be remembered that integral to His religious heritage was the conception and experience of Revelation through life.

Here, then, are four elements—chosen out of many, and far too sketchily described—of the religious experience to which Jesus of Nazareth served Himself heir—which He found and used, and which He so signally transcended.

I have not attempted to raise the question whether in this unique story of thinking and living there was or was not an actual operation of a living and eternal God. When, for example, I have spoken of a unique type of reflection or experience, I have not pointed to the source of that reflection. It is not to be thought that *all* the Hebrew people shared in that act of reflection: many of them at various times resented and

endeavoured to repress it. There was, however, among that strange people a still stranger class of persons known as prophets, whose activities, at their best, have defied analysis and explanation unto this hour. *Their* beginnings, too, were humble and crude: but in their best and most highly developed work, their genius is so astonishing that it is hard to describe it as other than under the influence of the inspiration of the Divine Mind itself, not guaranteeing its inerrancy, but guiding its direction and tendency and charging it with religious power.

The heritage of Jesus therefore in religion was unique. The momentum, if I may so speak, of a vast body of thought upon life as lived "in the midst of time by the strength and under the eyes of God," was behind Him, and He was in part its product and representative. He was not then a beginning *de novo:* but came in a succession which, I confess, to my mind bears unmistakable evidence of being the work of the spirit of the God with whom we have to do.

II. What manner of man then was this Jesus? He is the greatest personality in human history. No one, except a few abnormal and distorted minds, has ever questioned that. And because He is the greatest personality we know, one's speech of Him is apt to trail off into a series of meaningless laudatory epithets. I confine myself therefore to points about His self-presentation and

achievements which are relevant to my present purpose.

1. I point first to His sureness of tread in the field of religion. All the documents in which His life is recorded or interpreted agree on this. "He spoke as one having authority." Whatever questionings and struggles may have torn His spirit as He fought His way to truth are not only veiled from us, as having left no furrow on His brow, but we gain the impression, as we hear Him speak, of one who has *long been familiar with the truth He utters*. The most startling of them have long been the axioms of His own faith: in His serene calm He is mildly surprised that other men do not immediately see and understand.

The man who after painful struggle has just seen what appears to him to be a most valuable and illuminating truth, is notoriously apt in his fresh enthusiasm to be restless, heated, over-urgent, clamorous. Jesus in the realm of religion is always, as we say, the "past master": the one to whom the truth He speaks has become his own second nature. He has lost, if He ever had them, the fevers of the neophyte: long, very long before He opened his lips, His soul had entered into the peace of a settled possession of the truth. I should not be at all surprised if it were discovered that this impression of His long familiarity with and perfect mastery of the truth He uttered, contributed to the Church's dogma of His preëxistence. His interpreter who wrote the Fourth Gospel uses

amazing expressions regarding Him: he speaks of Him as "the son who is in the bosom of the Father," of His "having descended from Heaven" and as "the Lord" that "was in the beginning with God." It is I think impossible not to see behind such phrases the awe of those who heard Him, as though they instinctively felt that behind His complete mastery and readiness in the realm of truth lay a vast abyss of experience, not shared by any other of the sons of men.

Now this autonomous mastery in the field of religion and incisive comment on human life is all the more remarkable because Jesus is everywhere in the Gospels described as *derivative*, as leaning back on some one greater than Himself. In nothing is the interpretative Fourth Gospel, which so stresses His ultroneous sovereignty, more remarkable than this: that in it is also stressed this derivative quality. "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me"—"I can of mine own self do nothing"—"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." The full significance of this belongs to a later stage of our study. Here it is enough to be reminded that there is everywhere in the gospels (designed and undesigned) a suggestion of a hinterland of experience that not only gave Jesus unexampled intellectual confidence in the statement of religion but a confidence in the region of will. Quietly but firmly and uniformly He *com-*

manded men. He accepted the responsibility as well as the deferences due to masterhood. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am" is a legitimate expression of the attitude attributed to Him in the synoptic gospels. He was always Lord: precisely Lord.

2. Yet over against this and pointing to the end for the securing of which all this masterhood was but a means, is His selfless devotion to His fellowmen: His solicitous concern to secure, at whatever cost to Himself, their highest good. This subordination of His acknowledged intellectual and if I may so say volitional mastery in the field of religious and moral truth to the practical purpose of raising His fellow men to their morally and spiritually highest, marks Jesus off from the philosopher and the dialectician or the religious poet. He serves Himself heir to the prophets of Israel in His brave solicitude for His people as well as in the truth He uttered: but He easily transcends them all. And I need hardly say that in this concern for His fellows there is nothing sentimental or of that overdoing of compassion which always indicates an unbalanced and thrill-seeking nature. He is virile, resolute, courageous, stern and strong: it is the "terrible strength of the meek." It is from this point of sight that we should look on the stories of "miracles" attributed to Jesus. His deeds in the field of what we call Nature have the same origin as His deeds in the realm of the moral and spiritual. They are not "proofs" of His mission so

much as part of it: expression of His solicitude for the welfare of His fellows in every aspect of their life and demonstration of the goodwill of the Heavenly Father who desires that all evil and suffering be driven from human life. The greatest miracle of all, the Resurrection, in which He *took His life again* is no exception to this. It is the outcome of His unconquerable love.

These are I think the two features of His self-presentation which are relevant to our present enquiry. It will be seen by the thoughtful that they correspond to two features of human need: the need of sympathetic help, no less than the need of educative and directive control.

III. One must here add that the portrait of Jesus of which I have here alluded to two features only, must not be regarded as a static picture, standing alone in the midst of history. As it should not be detached in our view of it from its background so it must not be viewed apart from its achievements.

Now the field of Jesus' conquests is as yet far from covering the whole earth: but there are one or two features of these conquests which we must not forget. First of all the impression of this personality has been at the heart of these achievements. I do not mean that on the one hand there has not been a sentimental Jesuolatry rather the enemy than the servant of virile character, nor on the other hand that there have not been notable attainments

of a moral and religious sort along Christian lines without a strong personal attachment to Jesus. But upon the whole where this attachment has been most marked, there what we call Christian character and work have reached their best. And as it has been a personal conquest, so it is *on persons* that directly Christ has wrought. The energy called Christianity has of course created notable institutions: but the characteristic work of Christ has been on persons: no religious leader has equalled the achievements in the creation of personalities and it is within the Christian area that the world's most creative personalities have developed.

And this beneficent creative work He has accomplished because He believed and hoped in man. He knew that to make men anything, drastic reconstruction of their nature had to be accomplished—"ye must be born again." But He refused to despair of men, and they have found in Him a new "spring of energy," and have in their millions responded to His faith and hope. For they have known that He believed in them and hoped for them because He loved them. In Him as in so many of his followers, faith and hope and love were united: but the greatest of these driving forces was Love.

One is not so foolish as to suppose that one has solved the problem of personal religion when one has selected a particular historical figure as the

object of one's loyalty, and boiled down relevant impressions. Personal religion is a deeper thing than that, and no man possesses it who has not come into the presence, not merely of an admired hero, sage or saint, but of the Supreme Himself. That matter I shall discuss in my next lecture. Meanwhile surely enough out of the volumes that might be spoken has been said to make clear that if a man wishes to help his fellow men toward religious satisfaction, *it is in the direction of Jesus he should turn*. "In religion," said Glover, "it is Jesus or nothing. We live in a world in which Jesus is the last word." His background, His endowments, His disposition and motive, His achievements and the undimmed splendour of His powers today—these things *when taken together*, point Him out as the ideal companion for men as they set out to accomplish their destiny. Happy is he who does not fear that companionship nor the experiences into which it will inevitably lead him.

II

HOW JESUS FUNCTIONS IN RELIGION

In my last Lecture, I tried to show that if a man desires to help his fellowmen to religious satisfaction he will do best if he preaches to them Christ: in the sense, to begin with, of directing their attention to the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

But of course the selection of a hero or of an exemplar is not the possession of a religion. There is in men the craving to rest in GOD, in an Existence which has not come into being, which has not begun in history, but which IS from eternity. That is man's ultimate need: and as Karl Barth says "there is no wisdom in stopping at the next-to-the-last or the next-to-the-next-to-the-last want of the people; and they will not thank us for doing so." The only message then that will satisfy man's deepest need is a message about *God:* if you carry to men good news that will penetrate to their deepest necessities, it must be good news,—a gospel,—about *God.*

That sounds more platitudinous than it really is: there have been gospels that have stopped short of God and they have failed.

Now one of the earliest names given to the Christian gospel is the "gospel of *God.*"

The earliest message to a European Church of

which we have any record, the message of St. Paul to the Church at Thessalonica, to be dated probably somewhere about twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, gives, over and over again, to what we now call Christianity the title of "the Gospel of God." The emphasis on God in the whole Epistle is remarkable: the Church is the "Church in *God*:" conversion is turning from idols to *God:* good Christian living is satisfying *God:* paganism is grieving or ignoring *God:* Timothy is a minister of *God*. The mind of Paul is filled with the idea of bringing men into a right relation with *God*.

If then we preach Christ to men, we are in the end justified in doing so only if we know that Christ brings men to God, or *brings God about them:* enables them to rest in God, and from that centre of rest live out their life to the fullest.

Does Jesus do this? That is the question to which we must now address ourselves.

In endeavouring to answer it, I venture to revert to a statement made in my last lecture, that we must never detach Jesus from His *background*, but that background, character, disposition, religious consciousness, achievement must be taken into account in making our full estimate of Him.

I. Permit me, then, even at the risk of repetition, to refer again to Jesus' background in Judaism. Of that background we have the literary representation in the Old Testament. Consider what

that Old Testament is. It is a series of books that have one common theme—the intrusion of *God* into human life, in the interest of human welfare through obedience to righteousness. Consider the elements of which these books are made up.

(1) To begin with, a large part of the books is historical; but it is history with a bias, history edited in the interest of a dogma, the incredibly difficult dogma of the love of God. A segment of a nation's history is taken—a period of some 500 years during which the nation was a sovereign kingdom, and this (with an introduction necessary to explain who the nation was, and some stories of the people's fate after the sovereignty ceased) really constitutes the historical kernel of the material used in the Old Testament. The material, however, as I have said, is treated so as to bring out constantly (sometimes delightfully, sometimes unpleasantly) the factor of the interested Deity at work in the affairs of men for men's good. The area selected is relatively small; but the affairs of history do not depend for their importance on the size of the area they cover or the number of persons on the scene, but on the principles involved in the processes described. Here in the Old Testament is, as it were, a miniature of human life everywhere: a study of a segment of history from the Providential point of view, with more than a hint that other segments might with profit similarly be studied. That is the first element.

(2) A second is this: expressions are recorded

of what one may call classical reactions of the human spirit to this central fact of the Divine intrusion. Sometimes that reaction is a welcoming response, and expressions of that loving response abound, for example, in the Psalms. Sometimes, however, the reaction is one of dislike and resentment. The Divine Presence is felt to be irksome, oppressive. "Am I a sea or a whale," the hero of the epic of Job is made to say, "that Thou, God, settest a watch over me? . . . How long wilt Thou not depart from me nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?" With equal candour in both cases, both moods are recorded: and the result is a picture unparalleled in literature of what I may call the piebald results in the human spirit of the nearness of an interested, solicitous, righteous God.

(3) The third element is that of reflection on the inevitable outcome of this Holy presence among men who are far from holy. If the presence be welcomed and its guidance accepted, certain happy results will follow alike in individual and in institutional life. If, on the other hand, resistance be offered to the beneficent Divine advances, suffering must inevitably result, for the Divine will is strong and urgent on the side of what is good. To this reflective element the name of prophecy is usually given, though prediction pure and simple is not the function of the prophet, but warning and encouragement drawn from a study of that history with which, and with the treatment

of which, the prophets as a matter of bulk are found to have been mainly concerned.

These three elements in the Old Testament thus treat of the dogma of God's interest in men from three separate points of view: from the point of view of a *past* illumined by it—of the *dateless* moods of the human spirit begotten of it, and of a *future* contingent upon the reception given to it. History, poetry, philosophy—the three chief elements in a liberal education—are used to commend and drive home the doctrine of the love of God, "love" being of course understood as His concern (sometimes very stern) for the triumph of righteousness in man.

Now it is against this literary background that the life of Christ is set. His spiritual ancestors had been immersed in the truth of the *interested presence of God among* His human children. It was the atmosphere Jesus breathed, and in all His public work of which we have record He assumes God, assumes God's personal relations with men, assumes what we should call God's transcendence and God's immanence, or what He would probably prefer to call God's righteousness and tender mercy. Here is part of Jesus' power to help men in religion. The momentum of centuries of belief in God lay behind Him. True, the conception of the God believed in had varied and had never at any time been adequate; yet it lay along just lines, if I may so speak. Jesus at once accepted and transcended it, and did two things with it:

(1) He gave to men an improved conception of God, and (2) He brought the presence of the God thus better conceived, about men, enswathing men in the Divine.

It is well, I think, to keep these two things distinct in our mind. For the last thirty years at least, what is called Jesus' "revelation" of God—by which is meant His declaration of God's Fatherhood—has been proclaimed as the central service which Jesus has rendered to humanity. And no man in his senses would undervalue that service. In spite of Klausner, it is obvious that Jesus' conception of God and of God's interest in men went beyond that which He had inherited. Dr. H. R. Mackintosh has analysed for us this advance, and declares that in *four* ways Jesus' conception of God surpassed the Old Testament at its best.

(1) Jesus represents God as going forth in search of sinful men. He not only receives men "who come back to Him penitently: now for the first time in the history of Religion, it was made known that the Father unweariedly seeks the lost."

(2) "The Fatherhood so declared is vouched for not by verbal teaching merely: it is present in the tangible personality of Jesus . . . When Jesus had gone, men were to be found who knew—what before had not been known—that God is exactly like Jesus."

(3) "Jesus' revelation is new in its purity, its coherence, its inward spiritual harmony. Grant for the moment that every word of Jesus concerning

God had been uttered previously: still, the omissions are new."

(4) "National and particularistic limits are abolished once for all."[1]

No one then who has pondered over such words as these would speak in depreciation of the service which Jesus has rendered to religion in giving us a *conception* of God that is worthy of all praise and ever unsurpassable. But the securing of our intellectual enlightenment by a new and better conception of God is not Jesus' supreme service; it is *His accomplishing within men the actual Divine presence.* His chief use of His heritage and this chief transcendence of it lie in his functioning in Religion as *God-bearer*, and not merely *God-definer* or Revealer.

II. When we probe a little further into this function of Jesus as bringing God about men, enswathing them in a totally new way in the presence of the Supreme, and enabling them to find *rest* in that enswathement, we come upon a fact about Jesus Himself to which I feel sure sufficient attention is not being given in our prevalent thinking about Him. We forget that *Jesus was a new religious type.*

[1]Originality of the Christian Message, p. 51., Dr. Mackintosh quotes Claude Montefiore as agreeing with the view expressed under heading (1). " 'The Rabbis', writes Montefiore, 'welcomed the sinner in his repentance. But to *seek out* the sinner, and instead of avoiding the bad companion, to choose him as your friend, in order to work his moral redemption,—this was, I fancy, something new in the religious history of Israel.' "

No one can read the Gospels attentively without seeing that about the personal religion of Jesus there was an air of easy domestication in God which was a new thing in the earth. I think we can see in pre-Christian literature evidence that there had been a wistful longing among men after the freedom and warmth and finality of this type of personal religion. But the realization of the ideal had not been seen either in Hebraism or in Hellenism: on the contrary, during the late centuries immediately preceding Jesus, there is evidence that in Israel God had come to be thought of by too many people as a remote and stern lawgiver, and personal religion had become more and more a servile and terrified obedience to statute.

Upon this cold, dreary, harsh, and fear-stricken legalism, the behaviour of Jesus broke in, a surprise, a fascination, a blessed and welcome sight; and also as an irritation and an insult. On the one hand the legalists felt that their meticulous carefulness in the presence of what they believed to be divine statute was flouted by what one may call the holy moral anarchy of Jesus, His joyous superiority to mere commandments; while those who had strained against the leash of legalism recognized in Him that which their souls yearned after—a holy domestication in God, a filial relation with Him[1]: and they said of Jesus, "This is no servant only but a *Son of God:* there must be a

[1]H. R. Mackintosh describes Him as the "great exemplar of moral liberty."

Father beyond our sight, to account for Jesus." Jesus was Himself apparently fully aware of the uniqueness of His own type of religion. "No man," he is credited in St. Matthew with saying, "no man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." And as I have already said, the fourth gospel is throughout full of this unique quality in Jesus' religion. "No man," it says, "hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." No word could more clearly set forth the distinction of Jesus in the field of religion: He is the uniquely filial personality who comes to us Himself enveloped in God, remaining in God's bosom and deeply concerned that we should personally know the God who is behind and about Him. If the fourth gospel means anything, and is in any sense a reliable report of the interests of Jesus as understood in the early Church, this is the vital point in these interests: that men shall *so* know Jesus as to know God through Him, and knowing God through Him become possessed of an indestructible life in God.

Jesus then helps men to religious satisfaction and is worth preaching because, as a matter of fact, He comes to us, if I may so speak, *carrying God with Him all the way to where we are.* Receiving Him, *we receive God with and in Him:* we pass mysteriously but not unintelligibly through the historical and time-bound to the dateless and the

eternal. This is something which each man can test for himself: there is no more moving, life-altering experience than this discovery of the Ultimate God as all around and within us while our thoughts are upon Jesus, and none better attested. No greater service can one man render to another than to help to make so heavenly an experience possible for an earth-walking and earth-bound man.

III. The thought of Jesus as God-bearer is immensely reinforced when we pass from the background of His person and what I may call His own account of Himself, to the offices which as a matter of fact He has discharged and still discharges among men. It is hardly too highly coloured a thing to say that He has *done things which only God can do*. May I attempt at least to make clear what I mean, by referring to His work in the region of the twin curses that sit on the shoulder of humanity—the curse of guilt, and the curse of death?

1. The first of these horrors in human life has been described with stinging terseness by Lord Morley: "the momentariness of guilt and the eternity of remorse." There is in us men an awareness of an ideal of purity, over against which we may become so conscious of the "oppositeness" of things we have done and been, that we may be flung quite suddenly into an impotent anguish which makes life intolerable and for which there is

no relief in tossing or in stillness, in silence or in speech. I am speaking now not of anything theological nor of anything that can be created or dispelled by any psychological theory or suggestion, but of a fact of experience—the fact of the irreparable past and of the appalled and tortured present, which has sounded the most tragic note in human literature and driven suffering human souls into abysses of despair. To pooh-pooh this tragedy of the human spirit, nakedly confronting a fact which it has planted into existence, and which refuses to be expunged—to sneer at this is only loudly and blatantly to advertise one's superficiality.

It is in this pit of self-disgust and despair that man needs God. If GOD cannot or will not help, there is nothing before the really guilt-conscious spirit but suicide. Handling this matter, extricating men from this pit, verily is business for a God.

Now let us see how Jesus carried Himself in this region. First of all, He denounced sin, especially certain sins of the disposition, with a sternness which is terrifying. Gentle and understanding as He was to human weakness, and shifting the incidence of His rebuke from areas of behaviour in which the falsehearted men among His contemporaries would fain have heard Him violently reprove, He released in other directions forces of denunciation which are not spent to this day. There is something blinding in the rush of His severity against such sins as hypocrisy, cruelty and pride.

Whatever such words as "sin" and "evil" may mean to the modern mind, they were assuredly grim realities to Jesus: there is no sharper contrast in literature than that between the feeble deblaterations of some modern psychologists on the reality of wickedness, and the Titanic sanity of the Man of Nazareth.

Jesus gave a peculiarly poignant turn to these denunciations of sin by making men feel that wickedness is a gratuitous offence against the grieving heart of God. Doubtless this way of looking at sin was part of His heritage, and had been voiced by the psalmists and prophets among His people: but the sharpness of His reproach was in proportion to the new vividness with which He realized the love of God. And ever since, the most thoughtful students of Jesus have recognized this specialty in His view of man's wrongdoing: have realised that, wherever the mind of Jesus is in control, men come to think of their moral failure as peculiarly damnable because it *hurts God*.[1]

[1] It is worth while here to draw attention to some remarkable sentences in Fairbairn's "Place of Christ in Modern Theology," pp. 452 sqq. "Sin," he says "is a religious, indeed . . . a specifically Christian term . . . 'Vice' is an ethical term: 'Crime' . . . a legal term. But Sin differs from these in this respect: they may be in a system which knows no God, but without God there can be no sin . . . There is therefore (to speak with the older Theologians) something infinite in sin. To be sure, an infinite act by a finite being, even though done against the infinite, is indeed absurd. But what the phrase means is this: Sin, alike as act and state, belongs to the relations of man and God, and partakes of the immensity of these relations." Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 63.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that when Jesus spoke of sin, men were pricked in the heart and stung into penitence. True, the tender side of His so comprehensive nature, His gentle feeling for the tempted and the weak also produced penitence. From both sources, the wrath and the compassion, issued a stream of penitence in the world which many think is His most characteristic achievement: and attention has again and again been drawn by scholars to the paradox of Jesus—that, creator more than any man has been of penitence in others, He expresses no penitence for Himself.

Note this first, then: He so detested and inveighed against wickedness that though some men quite naturally hated Him for it and even ultimately slew Him for it, yet the hearts of others —of millions of others if we take His work as a whole—have been broken into shame and humbling and grief and repentance and cries for mercy.

Next, note that He announced with a confidence and a clearness that startled His generation, the *forgiveness of sins*, assuming in His own person, the right to absolve men from guilt. Here we come upon what is either His most daring venture in religion or the surest evidence of His Divine authority. When those who heard Him proclaim forgiveness to a stricken sinner said, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" they uttered a protest that finds an echo in every thinking mind. If there be such a thing as the forgiveness of sins, at least it is

only God who has the right to forgive; and Jesus never asserted His own residence within the will of God more uncompromisingly than when He arrogated to Himself the right to forgive.

But can even God forgive? Is there not a nexus between sin and guilt, between sin and consequence which even God cannot break? Millions of our fellowmen, notably in India, have so believed, and in India the name of Karma has been given to the law of this apparently indissoluble connexion between fact and consequence. The whole question is too deep to be thoroughly dealt with here. But it is to be remembered that what Jesus meant by forgiveness was not a remission of penalty or revocation of the Karmic law, but a reëstablishment of personal relations between God and the penitent, a reëstablishment which involves no change in the unchanging mind of God, but *does* emphatically involve the change in the mind and heart of the penitent which the abhorrence of his sin induces.

What that is in God which enables Him (still hating and abhorring sin), to open His heart to the penitent sinner without remitting the penalties that follow sin in the field of nature as shadow follows the moving substance on which light has fallen, Jesus does not explain in words. But in deeds He shews it forth. He gave the impression that He himself felt the wound of sin, and in His death He so shewed that wound that men soon after began to see that what they had witnessed on

Calvary was not merely murder, or the death of a martyr, but the manifestation on the plane of time of an "ineffable somewhat" in the heart of God to which we dare give no name, but which is *that* that makes it possible for God, at infinite cost, to carry out for penitent men and women a law of salvation deeper even than the law of Karma, and to redeem to Himself even men who have been steeped in iniquity. Jesus *has* thus redeemed men: brought them out of the "miry clay" of a quagmire of evil in which they were slowly sinking and out of a blanching fear that was the outcome of facts—facts not of imagination but out there in the field of other people's lives—facts which they could not master nor evade. From this Jesus *has* redeemed men and has brought them out; not merely into a world of emancipation, of relief from a loathsome burden, but a world in which their chastised and humbled spirit has found itself able to serve, and through that service to be restored to joy, and to find itself responding to the love of God with an honest, cleansed and aspiring conscience, almost as if—nay possibly more than if—the past had never been.

Work like this, involving acts of creation and the manipulation of laws more profound than the laws we see at work in Nature *is Godlike work*, the work of one who is veritably "in the bosom of the Father." The beneficiary of such work will not, by a generous mind, be judged harshly if between his benefactor and God he is neither able nor

anxious to distinguish; and if, a subject of Christ's redemption and reflecting upon it, he repeats the question not now in cynicism but in adoration "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

(2) Once more, Jesus entered the realm of the other twin curse that weighs down and frustrates human life: the curse of death.

There is nothing in which this generation differs from its predecessors more than in its attitude to death. Both pessimism and hilarity, the concealment of suffering and the familiarity in and since the war with the deaths of millions of men, women and children, have combined to make us indifferent to this agelong curse to which we give the name of a "negligible biological incident." But a saner outlook on life, a more generous appreciation of the potentialities in human nature, and of the vast disproportion, as things are, between capacity and opportunity, brings us back to the terror of what Morley calls "the awful law of death": a law in the presence of which faith staggers and is dismayed, hopes are flung into ruin, and love is crushed and bleeds.

What makes Death so crushing is no doubt on the one hand its amputation of human endeavour and on the other the thick blackness of the curtain that separates us who survive from those who have passed on; but behind both ideas is a horrible suspicion of a certain *moral* quality in death, as though it were a fateful crisis not in man's physical existence only but in his moral

career. Dr. James Denney speaks of death as "one awful indivisible experience, physical and moral, which cannot be analyzed and which is profaned[1] when it is identified with anything that could befall a lower than human nature."

To anyone who is not thinking of theology but who knows life's most devastating experience at first hand, that description of death will not seem overdrawn. It is this haunting air of association with the issues of our moral life and not merely its anguish-producing quality, that has made Death the centre of so much religious ritual and the occasion of so much religious exercise. When we come upon the death of a good man or a good woman we inwardly protest, and probably call in the aid of all sorts of over-beliefs to justify our protest. We affirm, far ahead of our ordinary convictions and far ahead of ascertained proof, that the person we mourn *cannot* be really remaining dead: "it is not possible," we say, "that he, (she) should be holden of death." For death and good men are incommensurables: the mind will not tolerate a schism between goodness and being.

When therefore we read that Jesus died, and died young, it is not in pity nor in sentimental

[1]Death is not the only human experience whose significance has been thus "profaned" in the language of the hour. An animalistic view of life has caused a similar profanation e.g., in current ideas of marriage, which is often spoken of as if it were a mere experiment in physical gratification. People need sharply to be reminded that mating is for animals, marriage for men; pain is for animals, sorrow for men; dissolution for animals, death for men.

sympathy but in the name of the moral order of the universe, of ultimate justice that we protest. "We indeed justly," we echo, "but this man hath done nothing amiss." And mark carefully, we protest not that Jesus was engulfed in death, but having felt the power of His goodness, we feel that that power itself should have defended Him from subjection to this last humiliation of Nature. And we begin to wonder what dark purpose He in His goodness could have had in submitting to the curse.

So naturally do thoughts arise, so naturally, I believe, did thoughts arise among those who first reflected on the complete career of Jesus, as to a possible purpose in His death. The evangelists are not afraid to say there was a design in His death. They are not afraid that they will expose their hero to the charge of suicidally throwing His life away. The fourth gospel emphasizes at every turn His autonomous sovereignty in dying. Why then did He die? The theologians crowd round us with their many answers, all converging on one idea that He died in order that through death He might destroy the power of death. But the point at the moment is that if we are to trust these many interpreters, Jesus in dying was not done to death, but attacked the problem of death on man's behalf. That is all that at the moment I need; for I am trying to shew that Jesus *has discharged functions that are worthy of a God*. When I read of His grappling with the problem of sin

I feel His Godlikeness; so when I read of His entering the chamber of death, to break death's power, I feel again the presence of a God.

And when I read that He conquered death and emerged from the worst that it could do with powers not merely unwounded and unimpaired but immensely enhanced, I feel, *long before* I face the evidence for or against the resurrection, that I am in the presence of a programme worthy of God. "The conquest of death"—think of it! Who could accomplish this but God alone! And please note carefully. The resurrection in the New Testament is no less entangled in the moral idea than, as we have seen, death itself must, to all thoughtful people, be. We habitually slip most unhappily into a way of speaking of Christ's resurrection, as a miracle, a "teras"—a wonder—to be stared at, to be "proved" or denied as an historic happening. But the New Testament way is to regard the Resurrection as a *moral* happening, a *moral* witness and guarantee and hope. The resurrection of Jesus (which is nowhere described) is not represented as a proof that something of man survives the process of death, nor is it regarded as a psychological reaction in the minds of the Apostles, but as the crown and triumph of Christ's *character*. He emerged from death because He was too good to be detained by death; and He rose to be the minister of a beautiful and holy life to all who desire, in the picturesque language of Scripture, to "die unto sin, and to live unto God."

In the handling, then, of the two curses which, with the pain they bring, make up the tragedy of our life, Jesus of Nazareth has shewn Himself capable—I will use a daring phrase—of *discharging the office of God* to His fellow men. He has brought nothing less than the mind and powers of God to bear upon the open sore of the body of humanity. The man who is proud of his integrity and professes to be stoically indifferent to death has no need of such offices, and is quick to resent and sneer at the attribution of such Divine powers to Jesus Christ. But the victims of a blinding remorseful self-disgust and the unhappy men and women who, turn whatever way they may, see but the one answer, "Death!" to all their questionings—the sin-sick and the dying—these have in millions known that Christ has come to them *bringing God with Him*, and has enabled them to rest their head on the shoulder of the Almighty Father, who is plenteous in mercy, and who cannot die.

Finally, I point to the peculiar qualities of the influence which Jesus is still exerting in the world.

An Indian thinker (I am almost sure it was Keshub Chunder Sen) said that he had found that Jesus has a unique power of "insisting on Himself": of haunting men as by a living presence. Undoubtedly this was the experience of the men and women who at the beginning of the Church led forth the Christian enterprise. If we may believe the Fourth Gospel, Jesus had Himself

led the inner circle of His Apostles to expect some such illumination of their consciousness. Whether this be so or not, it was a common denominator in their experience; Christ, they affirmed, was alive, and they believed themselves not to be cherishing merely a beloved memory, but to be in actual present communion with a living Friend and Lord.

There have been types of Christians, I admit, in which this relationship to the living Christ has been subordinated to their appreciation of the things He stood for: there will always be the *ethical* over against the *mystical* type among men; and the man who, perhaps because of dogmatic bias, or simply a dull imagination, does not know this living communion is apt to splutter contemptuously about the ridiculous sentiment expended by the other type on Jesus. It is true too that in all the Christian centuries, beginning with the immediately sub-Apostolic, there have been Saharas of thought and life, bodies of people who have thought of Christ only as "medium of a revelation which can now be apprehended apart from Him." *But the imperial vein of Christian experience has been Christocentric;* and the power that has driven the Christian enterprise along has been the living love of a living Lord.

Now this love has been (except in pathological cases) a religious love: that is to say, an experience of *God:* a becoming aware of the approach of the Highest. Christ has been (and where He is under-

stood is still) the Theophoros, the God-bearer. God is *there*, where the apprehension of Jesus is.

And the human soul, therefore, is at rest, looks out from a centre of rest. There is no magical stillness. The "rest" comes of knowing that the major tragedies of life are potentially at least under control. In Christ God is felt as having overcome the world. And therefore with buoyancy of step the Christian man goes out to complete the work of overcoming. He finds God not only in the visions of his own spirit, but out in the world at work creating a social order built on love; and he enrolls himself as a servant in God's work, *having the God* for whom he works, *always by his side*. And as he makes acquaintance with the work of God in the world, he finds it essentially universal, covering the life of all men and the whole of the life of each man: every part related to every other: the whole making up an orderly mass of achievement and purpose for which the fitting, the inevitable, title is the "Kingdom of God," a phrase which is surely the most fascinating generalization of all possible forms of good work ever presented to the mind of man. And in this Kingdom the Christian works with invincible hope: for he has one sentence chiming in his mind, the fruit of his knowledge of Jesus, "He *must* reign until he hath put all enemies under His feet."

Christ then functions in religion by bringing us into the very presence of God. And this is precisely why many unhappy and mistaken persons turn

away from Him. The air of the Divine nearness is oppressive to our self-love, and to our love of compromise with evil: and all of us feel in some measure an inhospitality of heart to the Divine Lover of our Souls. But even to this distrust of Him He is patient; and even where that distrust is most pronounced, it is worth while for us to plead with its possessors, and in a patience like God's own, work for its breaking down.

When then we preach Christ, we preach (let us remember) not merely one who describes God or unveils the beauty of God, but one who, beginning with us where we are, taking His place beside us, and lifting our heaviest burdens from our shoulders to His own, carries us all the way into the presence of the Highest Himself—*and leaves us there.*

III

WHAT IS THE "DIFFERENTIA" IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS?

The purpose of these lectures, as determined by the wishes of the Founder, is practical rather than academic merely. They are an attempt so to present certain aspects of the Christian message as to stir in the wills and hearts of university students a desire to proclaim the message and in particular to preach Christ as the centre of the Gospel.

Now there is a type of man whom such an appeal repels, because he cannot get away from the idea that to "preach Christ" is to preach metaphysics, while he is interested not in intellectual speculation or definition, but in *getting things done*, in removing abuses and inequalities and in the reforming and renewing of the world. To such a man ethics rather than theology makes its effective appeal. Now Christianity is not primarily a system of ethics, although in common with all religions it tends to be taken for an ethical system by the profane outsider. Christianity is primarily an *offer of fellowship with God*, and cannot live, unless the conditions of that fellowship are constantly kept before the people. But the *outcome* of this fellowship is in large part ethical: it is a new life issuing in new, sometimes creatively new, conduct; and the man who understands the Christian ethic and

the principles on which it is based is in an unrivalled position to lift and direct the moral life of his contemporaries, and thus do incalculable service to the world.

The subject of the Christian Ethic is vast and I feel poignantly my incompetence to deal with it. In a single lecture all that can be done is to draw, in outline, the figure of a subject which a lifetime of study and action is not enough to fill in.

The Christian ethic, it need hardly be said, serves itself heir, in the main, to the morals of the Hebrew religion. Of course the merest tyro in historical study knows that other races and countries outside Israel had their (sometimes excellent) moral codes and disciplines; and one of the disciplines in particular, that school of Graeco-Roman philosophy to which the name of Stoicism has been given, wrought powerfully upon the early Christian Church and on its outlook on life. I wish I had the learning, freshly and accurately to set forth that process of mutual interpenetration which went on between Stoicism and Christianity. There was not only an interesting parallelism between the two, but beyond doubt mutual indebtedness as well. The long travail of thought in Greece on human life, its meaning and right conduct, lies always in the background of the New Testament expositions of Christianity; and the thoroughly equipped student of the Christian ethic must have visited in the spirit, as St. Paul is

said to have done in the flesh, the headwaters not of Hebraism only, but of Hellenism as well. But for our immediate practical purpose it is enough that we should trace the parentage of the Christian morality to the mother religion of Judaism.

I. The Old Testament, which Israel Zangwill called "the most anti-Semitic book in the world," tells with astonishing candour the piebald story of the development of morals among the Hebrews. Some aspects of the matter are mutually contradictory and disappointing in the last degree, and some are permanently obscure. Yet standing back a little from the story as a whole one can see that there are certain distinctive features of the Hebrew ethic to which the Christian worship is very specially indebted.

1. To begin with, Hebrew morals are uniformly attached to religion. The summum bonum is "to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord,"—whoever "the Lord" may be. The scholars tell me, somewhat to my surprise, that this was in the ancient world a unique phenomenon. Glance for a moment at some other systems. What the truth is about the relation of conduct to religion in that hydra-headed amalgam called Hinduism, I do not know. But it is notorious that Buddhism in its primitive and authentic form, in outlining directions for right living, left out God; that Confucius, concerned supremely about morals, "discouraged prayer and all concern for the

supernatural;" that, in spite of quasi-theistic sanctions suggested here and there in Plato, the main appeal of moralists in Greece was to the sanction of a Reason wholly impersonal; and that Roman religion did not even pretend to moralize conduct, contenting itself with inculcating obedience and exactitude in the performance of certain ritual acts alleged to proceed from or to satisfy the gods. But in Israel, apparently from very early times, there was a close connection between, if not fusion of, religion and conduct—morality varying as the conception of God among the people.

One immediate corollary of this union of religion and morals was that a particular type of character—the religious man, the Saint—was taken as the ideal character (see Lecture I): a selection which, as the history of self-deception and hypocrisy abundantly illustrates, has always had its special dangers, but, as we shall see later, its enormous advantages. For, to put the matter in a nutshell, the "saint" has these ethical merits at least: he has humility, the first prerequisite of moral excellence; he possesses inner freedom, always a condition of sound moral health; he ought to be a man of a certain moral originality and creativity and conquest over circumstance; and all this because he "begins" with a sense of infinite debt to God.

I have said that under a system which makes piety the mother of conduct, morality necessarily

varies with the conception of God entertained. That is true not only of the moral *qualities* attributed to the Deity but of the *area* over which He is conceived to preside. If that area be narrow and sectional, a certain parochialism inevitably attaches to the conduct of the devotee; and it is common knowledge that an unhealthy particularism dogged the steps of Hebrew morality, as long as the area conceived as under God's control was narrowed to the life of one race; or worse, to segments only of that life. But in its highest form, Hebrew morality was at least moving toward a universalism which should correspond with the growing sense of the universal interests of God. And meanwhile the attachment of morality to the worship of one God had the enormous advantage of unifying the life of each devotee, gathering it around one central mastering interest and sanction and discipline; a concentration which was fitted at least to ward off the more deadly forms of dissipation, to save the character from *triviality* and to give it, if often a certain hardness, nevertheless a certain *dignity* and sternness with itself.

2. There is no discussion in the Old Testament of a subject which gives so much difficulty today—*viz.* that of the *alleged Personality* of God. We cannot positively say that the prophets had no room in their mind for *super*-personal aspects of Deity, and it is possible that their very daring anthropomorphism in language may point to some such thoughts. But they assume everywhere

that relations of a personal sort between men and God are valid as far as they go; that He is accessible to men as mind is to mind; that He has, as a fact, acted upon men in the past; and that He will ultimately vindicate His action in history.

This last idea, that a *Divine purpose* runs through history—the correlative of the idea of personality in God—is of tremendous importance for practical ethics. It is the very charter of moral progress. As Dr. Nash has put it in his stimulating work "The Genesis of the Social Conscience" (p. 3), "Biblical monotheism succeeds on the one hand in making God the keeper of the world's ideal and on the other in rendering the total life in time and place plastic under His hand. Thus the *potential* bulks larger than the *actual* . . . The possible then acquires broad margins of suggestion out beyond the actual."

3. And that *progress* which fellowship with a God of purpose fosters, necessarily tended toward a sharpened sense of the importance and responsibility of the *individual*, and an encouragement of instinct hidden in the recesses of human nature that the *individual* has the right to moral freedom. It may be true that in pre-Christian Israel not more than a few choice spirits (certainly one of them is the author of the first chapter of the book known as the prophecies of Isaiah) rose to the height of emancipation—to the temper which, pushing past enactments and scruples, is reverently and redeemedly domesticated in God. It is enough that

the potency of freedom was there in the ethic to which our Lord served Himself heir, and whose power He so vastly extended.

4. It goes without saying that such an ethic was full of the spirit of *hope*, and in unique fashion. "In antiquity," says Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, "the Jew alone escaped the blight of pessimism."[1] Why? Because he believed in God, a God of purpose. He had early been taught that he must make no graven image of his God; must not confine Him by outlines, whether of wood or stone or thought, *i.e.* must not mortgage nor inhibit advancing thought on God. God was always more than He was known to be. The outskirts of His ways might be known to men; the full thunder of His power was as yet unrevealed. Therefore sketches of the world-that-is-to-be abound, especially in the later (and often anonymous) prophets; some of these outlines of the ideal world are not yet outmoded as models for social welfare programmes. It is true that this expectancy in later Judaism surrendered in part to the impatience of apocalypticism, an impatience which plainly has left its traces in the New Testament. But who that has known the anguish of the would-be reformer as he tries in vain to scale the aching walls of the fortresses of human pride, will blame him if, beaten back again and again, he yields to the temptation to beat his head against the wall, and in the semi-unconsciousness which ensues,

[1] "The Originality of the Christian Message," p. 144.

falls a-dreaming of a divine intervention that smashes the fortress and opens new life and new resources for the people for whom he fights? The point is, the indefeasible *hope* was *there*, and we are the inheritors of its momentum and of its exhilaration.

There is, it is true, one aspect of this hope that has its pathetic side: it is the wistful yearning among the best spirits in Judaism for a relation to God and man which should be *above statute;* a yearning for the realization of a filial, affectionate intimacy with God and of a regard for one's fellows which should ensure right conduct toward them. It is this double yearning that Jesus fastened upon when, in answer to the question "Which is the first commandment of all?", he quoted from two separate books of the law *precisely the two counsels that are the most distinctly super-legal:* "Thou shalt *love* the Lord the God. Thou shalt *love* thy neighbor." In these counsels there is an anticipation of precisely that which is the distinctive differentia of Christian morality. But alas! in Judaism, until Christ himself appeared, there was lacking the dynamic of an ardent attachment to a person who in Himself realized the ideal.

Here then are four remarkable features of the Hebrew pre-Christian ethic:

(1) It is wedded to *Religion*, and its cherished type is the religious man living under a sense of infinite obligation to God.

(2) It finds its ground in the alleged *purpose* in history of a holy God.

(3) It is at once social, and yet encourages a strong sense of *individual* responsibility.

(4) It derives from its purposeful theism, despite all baffiements and postponements, a certain tone of inexpugnable hope, exhilaration and *joy*.

Now it is the word *joy* that must be in our mind as we turn our thought to the Christian ethic. "When we open the New Testament," says Dr. Denney in an often quoted sentence, "we find ourselves in the presence of a *glowing religious life*. There is nothing in the world which offers any parallel either to this life, or to the collection of books which attest it."[1] Note the word *glowing:* it applies equally to the ethical outcome of the new religion and to the religion itself. For, indeed, the first thing to be said about the Christian ethic is that like its predecessor it is rooted in religion. "The ethic of the New Testament is fundamentally a religious ethic significant of and directed toward a communion with God in which goodness appears in the richly various moral expression of the new life."[2] A new, glowing, enthusiastic life, spiritual and moral, had come into the world, and men began to live by the power of its sheer joy.

It is unnecessary to say that the source of this glowing happiness *was in the personality* of Jesus.

[1] Jesus and the Gospel, p. 1.
[2] M. Mozley, The Doctrine of God, p. 76.

I have already spoken of Him as a "new religious type" and have quoted the description of Him as the great exemplar of moral liberty. I wish we could lay ourselves open to the full impression of this joyous, blithe, enthusiastically happy, confident and triumphantly restful aspect of Jesus Christ's personal life. We are so much in danger of submerging this view, owing to the influence of the tradition of His sadness under the cloud of tragedy in which His life went out. But I for one cannot believe that the tradition misrepresents Him which in the Fourth Gospel makes Him so often refer to "his own joy" and to His desire to share it with His friends, for we are not dependent on this Fourth Gospel for the record of His so frequently using the expression "Be of good cheer." The total effect of His person and career upon men was one of unprecedented exhilaration; and the message of the career was recognized at once as good news.

It was inevitable that something of this Exemplar's moral liberty should characterize the ethic derived from Him. Everywhere in His teaching He opposes and deprecates the incarceration, the servitude of legalism. The life he illustrates and recommends, being theocentric, needs no meticulous statutes; it is held in the ribbon leash of love; it is free, because it is at length at home.[1]

And because it is theocentric, it is *inward:* as

[1] I am conscious of the fact that this is a sadly imperfect account of the *sources* of Christian liberty. To give it in full would lead us beyond the limits of these lectures.

solicitous about the beginnings of disloyalty to the Father in motive and intention, as it is about the manifestations of a disloyal spirit in overt act. It is a morality aware of the Deity who is its source; rejoicing in, while astounded at its privilege not merely in obeying, nor even in loving, but in coöperating with God, until that which is the very law of His life is discovered as the law of one's own. The amazed rejoicing in this feature of the new morality appears all through the New Testament, is perhaps specially conspicuous in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians and in the late homily known to us as II Peter.

Again, the ethic of Jesus is never for solitaries, but for men and women living in communal life. It postulates a brotherhood of like-minded friends, as well as a field beyond. Amongst the brethren, it recognizes a close and affectionate bond to exist, *because* of the common experience of being domesticated in God. *Brotherhood is the corollary of sonship to God.* And as to the "field beyond," the same experience of sonship is represented as moving its recipients, not to proselytism but to a stretching out of friendly hands that they may come to share the joy of a reconciled intimacy with their Father God.

The type of man assumed in an ethic of this kind has already been perhaps sufficiently indicated. The ideal is so high that Christian people might well have fallen into despair before it, were it not for the career of Jesus and the powers it

released. Like the Old Testament "saint," the Christian saint has the foundation of his moral life laid in a sense of *infinite obligation*. He thus starts from humility and a chastened sense of dependence. He comes, however, to rejoice in his freedom from statute and from conventional rules; yet his freedom does not entitle nor encourage him to ignore the needs of those around him: he is (as St. Paul, and Luther after him, so clearly saw) free from all men *that he might be the servant of all*. His life issues in the constant exercise of the ministrant spirit. Sainthood becomes the equivalent of free devotion to men, issuing from a heart full of a sense of gratitude for the unmerited kindness of God. The saint is detached from the world only in the sense that his real life is "hid with Christ in God," and he is detached only in order that in that detachment he may the better secure the dynamic by which he is maintained in service to the world.

Need I add that the Christian ethic shares in, and even exceeds, the *hopefulness* characteristic of the ethic of Israel. Jesus Himself ministered to this hopefulness in at least four ways: (1) He was a startling revelation of the potentialities of mankind. (2) He was and is a Sacrament of the love of God. In His person and career men felt they touched the very ground of Reality and discovered that God is love. (3) He suffered men to expect His return to earth. We have today a thousand difficulties about that "second coming,"

and can no longer accept the crude forms in which the hope was in early days expressed. But we ought not to forget that it stands for a wistful and ever radiant expectation, and that it has proved a powerful stimulus to the human will. (4) And fourthly, Jesus ministered to the strength of human hope by His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. In that capacious phrase Jesus compressed ideas which have been as wine to disheartened souls: the expectation that God would bring order out of the chaos into which the life of our inchoate humanity had fallen: that He would unify that life without imperilling the values of its variety: that He would bring individual lives to the fulness of their capacity by giving each one his appointed place and service in that "ordered array of God's willing sons," into which He believed that the disintegrated and confused and warring masses of human lives could one day be transmuted.

You see, then, that the Christian morality, like its parent the Hebrew ethic, is rooted in religion; commends the same individual type; rises, as Hebrew morals did, at its best above statute to love; and like the ancient religion is pledged to an inexpugnable hope.

Such in the barest possible outline, is the ethic described in the New Testament. Whatever may be our view of the divergence of theologies in the New Testament, we cannot but see that its ethic is everywhere one and the same. As our accounts of

Jesus' ethical teaching are in perfect harmony,[1] so is there fundamental harmony between the ethic of Jesus and the ethic of Paul.

But when we pass out of the New Testament into the subapostolic literature, there is a grievous falling away from the central principle in the Christian ethic. Christian virtue is exhibited with intelligence and some adequacy, and the distinction between the "two ways" of life, the way of darkness and the way of light, impressively set forth. But already there is dimness of vision as to the *dynamic* of Christian living in the person of the crucified and risen Lord, and a loss of apprehension of the moral liberty that came to us through Him. Paul begins to be forgotten; legalism has already, as so often since, begun to replace the evangelical spirit of freedom; the way is being prepared for servitude, not only for the servile spirit toward a receding God, but for unmanly subjection to human priests as mediating and measuring and regulating the moral life. The heavy hand of sacerdotal intrusion lies upon the church for many centuries; and though the light is never swamped by the darkness, and here and there blithe spirits appear who in some little measure reproduce the joyous spirit of our Lord, upon the whole emancipated gladness is surrendered for gloomy and morbid and cringing tempers and a tyranny which insults the nobility of human nature.

[1] E. F. Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 10.

Of the Reformation, which it is the fashion now in many quarters to decry as it has been in many other quarters to overestimate, there are few nobler aspects than the rediscovery by Luther of the principle of religious liberty and its publication in 1520 in his little book "The Freedom of the Christian Man," with its paradoxical thesis: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none: A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one." The fight which Luther maintained, in the strength of this Christ-given liberty, against pretensions of priests to control the human spirit is second (in what one may call intellectual grandeur) only to the great conflict of St. Paul himself for the same principle and against the same intrusive love of power. But after the Reformation once more the light grew dim; the Protestant churches became themselves centres of legalistic, statutory moral teaching and of sinister efforts to bind the human spirit by the insistence, under pain of supramundane punishment, on adherence to the way of rigid orthodoxy. And that kind of crisis with its two elements—on the one hand the emergence once more of the Pauline doctrine of what has been called a holy moral anarchy, of the ardent and enthusiastic Christian living that transcends all statute and is love pouring itself forth in zealous and happy torrent, and on the other the dying down of the fire of enthusiasm and the putting on of clamps of discipline instead—was to

appear again and again in the centuries since the Reformation, and it is with us now.

But thank God, our era has seen a revolt unprecedented in strength from human authority, and a determined attempt to secure, each man for himself, a satisfactory direct relationship with the Supreme which one hopes will be a guarantee that the new study of Christian ethics will not be followed by lapse into legalism.

In our time, as you so well know, the teaching of our Lord on human life has been subjected to close critical scrutiny. It is seen that His ethic does not cover the whole area of our modern complex life; and yet that it lays down principles of conduct, which were they followed seriously, would at least moderate the acerbity of social strife and bring in a better order of living.

Some forty-six years ago Dr. C. Loring Brace in his famous book "Gesta Christi" made the following enumeration of causes which are deeply indebted to the ethic and personality of Jesus. If I recite them, you will see not only how their complete triumph would mean a new world, but how in the degree to which they have been victorious they have already changed the world and opened the way for greater changes still. Here is Dr. Brace's list:

"Regard for the personality of the weakest and poorest; respect for woman; the absolute duty of each member of the fortunate classes to raise up the unfortunate; humanity to the child, the

prisoner, the stranger, the needy and even to the brute; unceasing opposition to all forms of cruelty and oppression; the duty of personal purity; the sacredness of marriage; the necessity of temperance; the obligation of a more equitable division of the fruits of labor, and of a greater coöperation between employers and employed; the right of every human being to have the utmost opportunity of developing his faculties, and of all persons to enjoy equal political and social privileges; the principle that the injury of one nation is the injury of all, and the expediency and duty of unrestricted trade and intercourse between all countries; and finally a profound opposition to war, and determination to limit its evils when existing, and to prevent its arising by means of international arbitration." (Gesta Christi, Preface.)

Merely to recite this list of causes is to give on the one hand a succinct account of the great moral and spiritual conflict of the last nineteen centuries, and on the other to suggest how much there is yet to be accomplished ere the ethic of Jesus is triumphant over all life. To this subject—of the task yet to be fulfilled—men are devoting more thought than ever before, as they realize that they are living in an unprecedently contracted and therefore opportunity-yielding world. They begin to see how much more there is in Jesus, as Dr. Glover has said, "than has yet been accounted for," and their glance is forward to the land that is yet to be possessed.

One illustration of this must suffice. It is the whole question of our human relation to what we call Nature—to the world of entities animate and inanimate which we think of as beneath us, and as made solely for our use. I need not weary you by recalling at great length our need for an effective ethic in this matter. Sermons and books and magazines abound in warnings about the possible conquest of the Man by the Machine, giving voice to apprehensions that are very widely felt indeed. Under one aspect the crusade against War is motived (at least in part) by this fear that the powers we have acquired over Nature may turn to our undoing. There are sins that fall short of this master-sin of War whose prevalence we owe to widespread neglect of the preaching of the Biblical teaching on our relation to Nature: thanklessness, waste, cruelty, idleness, thoughtless self-indulgence, lighthearted breaches of the laws of health, unChristian asceticisms, legalisms and remainders of Pagan dualism, baldness in worship and contempt for the spiritual suggestiveness of Nature; the prostitution to evil ends of resources of Nature discovered in scientific investigation; pride in technical progress without the quest for spiritual progress to control it.

The Old Testament is rich in useful teaching on Man's relation to Nature, teaching which Christianity cannot be said to have faithfully used. Our Lord Himself was a country rather than a city man, and found His chief delight in and most

vivid illustrations from the secular life of the countryfolk, the people who were nearest to soil and sea. But the leaders of the apostolic and subapostolic ages put, as Dean Sperry has reminded us, a "metropolitan stamp on Christian thought," and it is only within the last three centuries that thinking of a Christian colour has dwelt on the beauty, use and meaning of Nature. It is time, high time, that the balances of the Christian ethic should be readjusted. We must go back not only to our Lord's teaching, but to the teaching of His ancestral religion, which he assumed, illustrated and enforced. If we do, we find truths of whose significance and value our generation sadly needs to be informed. For example: the Bible assumes that the sovereignty which man enjoys over the other works of God's hand is limited by the moral ends which it serves. It assumes too the divine origin of all forms of valid science and constructive art. The work of the agriculturist, guided by knowledge secured through careful observation of nature, is traced directly to the direction of the divine spirit,[1] with a frankness of recognition that shames us by recalling to us that we have read something of the kind in the Georgics and very little of the kind in Christian theological literature. The Spirit of God who in the Bible is the teacher of ploughmen, the instructor in woodcarving and embroidery[1] as well as the inspirer of good laws and good government, be-

[1] Isaiah 28:29.

comes in most Christian theological books a mere ecclesiastical functionary, interested solely in the stimulation and regulation of the interior life of men or of the activities of the groups they form as religious persons.

Further, the Scriptures recognize, as only now philosophers and psychologists are beginning to realize, the extent of the sympathy between the souls of men and the physical environment in which these souls are set,— the action of body upon mind, and of mind on body. We are dimly beginning to see that the eye affects the heart; that sense perception intensifies feeling, and on the other side that sin infects places as well as people; so that when an ancient prophet declares in a time of moral defection that the "earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws . . . therefore hath the curse devoured the earth,"[1] we begin dimly to see the outline of economic laws behind the veil of what we had taken to be merely poetry. We are quite obviously drawing near the frontier of a vast area of discoveries in this region, which we can as yet only vaguely indicate as the region of the interaction of spirit and matter; and there is a magnificent opportunity for patient research in this whole region. For (and here is the final illustration I shall give of lands yet to be discovered) the Bible and notably the New Testament refuses to allow us to regard Nature, as we see it, as having

[1]Exodus 25: 30-35.

arrived to remain forever as it is now. The prophets of Israel were insistent,—even to a point where they must have aroused the derision of their contemporaries,—insistent upon a future of glory before what we call the natural world; declaring that it was in the will of God that an environment should arise consonant with this need of God's redeemed people and that the humblest of the creatures should somehow share the glad expansion of life which the golden era would bring in. Into every picture they draw of the golden age to come, Nature is introduced, and finds its place.[1]

This optimism, pivoted on a moral contingency, is intensified in the New Testament. We cannot today find ourselves accepting in detail the picture of the second coming of Christ. But while we reject the alleged external accessories of the second advent, we ought not to forget what it has meant to man's view of the world that he has been led to expect as the fulfilment and consummation of the variegated life of men and kings around him, the advent of the Kingdom of God and its Prince. "By the dogma of the Second Coming, nature and history are put into the hands of the Christ who is God's best, as clay is taken into the hands of a master sculptor."[2]

Here surely is a mass of material on which the best trained minds in this or any university may well spend their energy. I am told that in the

[1] See Isaiah XI, 5-9; Isaiah XXXV; Isaiah XLV, 25.
[2] H. S. Nash, Genesis of the Social Conscience, p. 94.

ancient Hellenic world of thought there is to be found no trace of the idea that *work*—work upon the fabric of nature—can be a morally ennobling thing; and this although "man in the mass has been a workman," and "that which marked the end of animal development and the beginning of human history was the discovery of the *hand*."[1]

Take that single thought, and link it with the profound truth so often emphasized by Dr. L. P. Jacks (and indeed visible to any thoughtful observer of his time) that somehow the alienation of labour from culture *must* be ended, and hand and brain work in harmony if civilization is to be not so much saved as begun,—and you will see what a stupendous, what a reconciling, what a creative life-work is before the man who, with the glow of a great enthusiasm caught from the discovery of God in Christ, determines to investigate and make experiments in the Christian ethic, and will share that which he finds with a needy waiting world.

[1] DeMorgan, History of Civilization. *Hibbert* Journal for Oct. 1928, p. 49.

IV

WHY A COMMUNITY OF FAITH?

PERHAPS at no period since the days of the early persecutions has there been more general and more bitter criticism of the Church than there is today.

Not that that criticism is universal or unqualified among thoughtful people. "In spite of failings," says Dr. L. P. Jacks, "the Church, inclusively considered, is unquestionably the most precious asset of our civilization." But in spite of reasoned judgment like this, there is no question that there is widespread discontent with the Church: the huge percentage of our people that has grown totally indifferent to the Church, is proof enough. For them the Church and its functions have simply ceased to exist. "Two-thirds of the entire population of the United States have no definite connection or affiliation with any form of organized Christianity." Life is for them complete without the fellowship of the Church. If a man, therefore, feels reluctant to enter the ministry of Jesus Christ, on this among other grounds that such a life will drive him into the ecclesiastical area which his soul loathes, he may rest assured that his attitude is thoroughly in accord with a temper and bent very prevalent in our time.

This is not the place in which to try to evaluate in detail this outburst of bitter dislike of the

Church. But it may be worth while to recall that in its most debilitating form, *viz.* disappointment with the Church among those who were born into it and under its shadow, the feeling is in sharp contrast with the joy in "the fellowship" which marked the first stepping out of the Church into the world. The "fellowship" (which was conceived as the New Israel, under a new covenant) had scarcely more than begun to show itself when prophetic souls began to dream high things for it. When St. Paul rose to the full height of apprehension of the meaning of his ministry of Jesus, he declared that even in his day (still, so far as numbers were concerned, the day of small things) he was helping by his preaching to "let the full sweep of the divine wisdom be disclosed now, by the church, to the angelic rulers and authorities in the heavenly sphere, in terms of the eternal purpose which He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord." In other places in Paul's writings, and in the Apocalypse, the Christian fellowship is already personified as an alter ego or Bride of Christ, her corporate life the agent of His presence and fulfiller of His life work and suffering.

Thus, well within the first century, the Christian fellowship is idealized. How general that idealization was, may be faintly guessed from a reading of the "Visions" of Hermas, a work "found in general circulation in the eastern and western churches, soon after the middle of the second century." The visions of the Church show clearly

that the conception of the Christian fellowship throughout the world as one, a Life capable of being hypostatised and regarded as authoritative, was well domesticated in the public Christian mind. The visions stress the antiquity of the church, for her origin is traced back to the very beginning: "she was created before all things: for her sake the world was framed."[1] And as the poet stretches back his imagination and sees the Holy Church, like the Wisdom of God, sharing the Divine Counsels at the beginning of all things, so he stretches his imagination forward, and sees the Church becoming ever younger, fresher, more powerful. At first she is a very aged woman seated on a chair. In the next vision, "her face is youthful, but her flesh and hair were aged, and she spoke to me standing: and she was more gladsome than before. But in the third vision she was altogether youthful and of exceeding great beauty, and her hair alone was aged."

All this means that in the morning of the Church's life her fellowship seemed, to poetic souls within her, so glorious that they sang of her as something transcending time, whose victories were to grow ever more and more abundant as time rolled on.

Contrast that joyous idealization with the cynical attitude to the church of many even within her membership today! Which is nearer to the truth of things?

[1]Hermas, Vision II—4.

It seems to me that the way to a right conclusion about this lies in thinking of the church, not in its existing organizations, but first in its central idea. The church is essentially a voluntary association of persons brought together by their common recognition of the beauty and value of certain moral or spiritual ideas or acts. That is at bottom what the church is; and the matter has only to be stated thus to make us see how inevitable such associations have always and everywhere been, where there was common possession of moral or spiritual treasure. It is of course impossible to say when or where men first looked into one another's eyes in mutual recognition of the worth of some spiritual idea, or action; yet where that fellowship or mutual understanding was generated, there, among that group the idea of the church was born. This is only to say that the beginning of the church is really hidden in the mists that cover the morning of the world.

In a nation like Israel, which from very early times possessed moral and spiritual treasures of a very high order, it was inevitable that associations for the contemplation and preservation and use of these treasures should spring up. No one knows exactly when such associations began. It is customary to point to the emergence in the Exile (586-526 B.C.) of the institution of the synagogue, that is, of a gathering for mutual education and edification, and for prayer. But there are hints of something of the sort even earlier. In the book of Isaiah

(Chapter 8) there is an account of an incident in Isaiah's ministry which looks like the founding of a spiritual fellowship. The King and people had stubbornly persisted in a course of political action which Isaiah, as counsellor of the King, felt sure would lead to disaster. Remonstrances were of no avail; and Isaiah with his two sons and possibly a small group of friends seemed to have temporarily retired from public life, not in sulky mood, but that he might, through that sequestered group, render a needed service (threefold as we shall see in a moment) to the people.

"I will seal up my message, and commit my counsel to the safekeeping of my pupils; then I will wait on for the Eternal, who now hides His face from the house of Israel; I will hope for Him. I and the two children whom the Eternal has given me are omens and portents set in Israel by the Lord of Hosts, who dwells on Zion Hill."

This incident is accorded considerable importance by Wellhausen[1], who says that Isaiah literally founded the church within the theocracy, *ecclesiam in civitate Dei*. As head and founder of the prophetic party in Judah, Isaiah was involuntarily the man who took the first steps toward the institution of the church. "Till Isaiah," says Robertson Smith, Wellhausen's brilliant pupil, "no one had dreamed of a fellowship of faith dissociated from all national forms and bound together by faith in the Divine word alone. The formation of

[1]Prolegomena to the Hist. of Israel, p. 485.

this community of faith was the great work of Isaiah's life. His work brought to the birth the conception of the church, and of a new era in Religion."[1]

Unhappily we do not know what became of these gatherings called together by Isaiah, whether or not they are continuous with the meetings 150 years later and emerging under the name of the synagogue. If there is a stream of organic connexion, it runs for 150 years underground. But when we begin to examine the *purposes* of Isaiah's little fellowship, the *functions* it was meant to discharge, we see that these were in a way inevitable, and that they could not but remain the same whether before, during or after the Exile. For the functions lie in the nature of the case.

1. First of all, by the time of the Exile, and even by Isaiah's time a considerable body of material had been accumulated in the possession of certain persons—material oral and literary which was interpretative of the national experience in the past—comments on features of the national life sometimes taking the form of a rewriting of history from a particular point of view, sometimes taking the form of expectations of the future, but, in any form, essentially *comments*, believed to represent the mind of the unseen Jehovah on the nation's doings. When Isaiah said, "I will seal up my message," he seems to mean more than that he will cease to speak in public; he seems to mean that he

[1] Robertson Smith, Prophets of Israel (1st ed.) 274, 275.

with others, will pore over the material in his possession, including addresses of his own, collect and collate them and make all available for persons of a later day. This consideration of what was believed to be the mind of God became and remained a leading function of the synagogue. By means of it, the word or expressed mind of God was kept alive, translated into the vernacular of each generation, "applied" to the life of each generation, always keeping folk reminded of the fact that we are being watched, and outside one another's comment on our life is God's comment.

2. A second function of the group whether Isaian or Exilic, seems to have been that of maintaining alive the flame of prayer. "I will wait on for the Eternal." The synagogual gatherings furnished a focus for the devotional life of the people, lit a lamp of prayer in times when the fire of worship was burning very dimly among the people outside.

3. And a third function seems to have been something which the group, not by what it said or wrote so much as by its very existence, could perform. It was to be itself a sacrament of hope and warning to the people as from God himself: an encouragement to their faith; a rebuke to their relapse from serious attention to spiritual things. ("I will hope in the Lord; and I and my children will be omens and portents.")

Let us follow these gatherings for just a moment. They remained until and long after Jesus'

day, and exist still. Jesus shared in them. His tremendous personality, which, as Canon Scott Holland says, "crashed into history with such terrific force that he rent it in twain," soon caused these gatherings to break through national and racial frontiers, and to discharge their functions across the boundaries of the peoples and even on the borderland of two worlds. But essentially the same three functions remained at the core of the activity of the fellowship: study of the word for its better proclamation, the maintenance of prayer, and the encouragement and warning of the people.

In our complex modern life, the Church, the successor of the synagogue, no doubt has uses which go beyond these. She has to take her part in exercising moral control of the people and must lead in social reform. But the three functions I have named: the effective guarding of the treasure of the Divine word, so that its significance for each generation will be carefully thought out; the effective keeping alight of the torch of collective devotion, so that a focus of aspiration and of intercession may be provided for the people; and the offering of pledges of hope as well as instruments of warning in view of the Divine purposes for men—these three functions must ever be central in her life. Each of them addresses itself, no doubt, to the whole of our human nature, thought, feeling, and will; yet each of the three has its chief objective in one department (if in these

modern days we are allowed even for a moment to mention "departments" of human nature). The study, teaching and preaching of the word cares for our intellectual apprehension of the meaning of life; worship releases and controls emotion; the sacramental action of the church is directed to the fortification of our will, the stabilization of our purposes.

It is worth dwelling on this, for the simple but startling reason that there exists no other institution on earth which thus in threefold fashion ministers to the whole of our human nature individual and collective, as does the Christian Church.

What then is to be our personal attitude to this unique institution? It is easy and inexpensive to say for the thousandth time that she has failed in her task; has hopelessly compromised herself with the world; has become a corporation or group of corporations seeking not first the welfare of mankind but their own aggrandisement, and so forth. Men of strong purpose will brush all that aside as irrelevant or worse. The question is, "Is the Church's task worth doing? Is it a big enough thing for a man to give his life to?" Mind you, this is not to regard the Church as an end in itself. It is a means, not an end; an instrument for service. The point is: For what service? What does the service mean in our day?

Let us go patiently back again to the three functions which she was designed chiefly to discharge.

1. The "preaching of the word": what does that mean in our time? What does it involve? The generations immediately preceding our own, and our own to some extent, have suffered from a curious obsession that preaching is easy; an obsession possibly assisted by the fact that innocent boyhood has so often been made to admire the facile loquacity of insolently irreverent persons in the pulpit, persons without nerves, without fear, and without shame. One of the deepest needs of the Church today is the elimination of this type from our preachers, even if the number of our gospellers be thereby greatly reduced. We have to recover an appreciation of the difficulty of what is called "preaching Christ." Consider for a moment some of the questions which an intelligent and honest man, despising the rôle of a chattering echo, has to come to terms with ere he can preach.

First of all there is a group of questions of a philosophical and theological kind that are part of the prolegomena of preaching. Has Life, which this preaching sets out to interpret, any meaning at all? Is it capable of interpretation? Mysteries cannot all be solved and no one expects the solution of all mysteries through preaching, but is an interpretation possible which can be transmuted into a message of comfort, of reënforcement, of strength to go on? If life does have such meaning, is that meaning gathered into the mind of one Supreme Personality conscious of the minds of men and with access to them? Can I believe that behind

the things I see, behind their infinite variety, their frequent triviality and their still more frequent tragedy, there is a Thinking Mind and Heart, of Some One who "ponders all the goings" of men, who cares for men and means well by them? Is this God today able and willing to speak even part of His mind to and through me? In other words, is there one living God, personal (however much more), righteous and solicitous, and vocal?

These are difficult questions indeed: no man endowed with the gifts which would justify his speaking to other men on religion can fail to see how formidable is the task of coming to such terms with them that a man can go forth clothed in the authority of informed conviction to preach the word of God to men.

And then there is a group of historical and literary questions to be settled. For example these: Do we possess any moderately credible transcripts of the Divine mind on human life? In what sense can the religious literature which came down to us from Israel be regarded as containing verifiably accurate transcripts of the Divine mind? Is Jesus of Nazareth such a transcript? What value is to be given to the Apostolic interpretation of the message of His mind and character and career? How shall we estimate and be guided by subsequent thought upon Him and on his religious heritage? Is there such a thing as inspired literature? Is there any book, or are there any books, in which we can

find philosophy of history which we may regard as authoritative?

We often fail to realize that problems like these, involving immense difficulties and demanding for a reasonable judgment upon them, the discipline of hard reading and controlled thinking, lie behind the work of preaching, of any preaching which is to be more than a momentary excitation of feeling, of any preaching which is to be worth a man's while, and which can permanently affect others' lives.

And then I need hardly say that in addition to all this, there are innumerable questions arising out of the life of the time in which we preach. It is our business as preachers to be a "channel between the permanent and universal truth, and the local and temporary thought,"[1] to light up the segment of life through which we are passing by the illumination of commenting Divine mind. But if we are to be this we must be able to know our time, to "decipher the meaning of this era;"[2] to find our way amid the puzzlements caused by its mental attitudes, and to know some of the problems with which individuals are obsessed, and society vexed and harassed. Psychology on the one hand, and the socio-political currents of interest on the other—these are part of the things the preacher must know something of if he is to deal, in intelligent sympathy, with individual and people in his own time. Is this a cheap or trivial task?

[1] Garvie, The Christian Preacher, p. 15.
[2] Luke XII, 56 (Moffatt).

Nor can the preacher ignore the questions that gather themselves around himself—the management of his own religious life, the cultivation of his own gifts, vocal and intellectual, the organization of his work, and the maintenance before his mind consistently and intelligently of the end of his preaching—that he and those of his fellowmen entrusted to his teaching be led out into a free life lived in and from God, and motivated by a liberated and glad surrender to the purposes of the Kingdom of God.

And yet there are people who think this kind of thing is not a man's job, and unworthy of a serious man's serious attention as a life work!

And all this, so far, relates only to the Church's first function of continuing the preaching of the word.

2. The Church's second function, as we saw, is that of maintaining alive the flame of collective worship, resting of course on private prayer. Who is there who has studied this so neglected subject of worship who does not know that it bristles with difficulties, some of them probably insoluble, or so nearly insoluble as to constitute a challenge to every informed and adventurous mind? Is "a life of prayer" possible in "a world of science"? If natural science and philosophy give us permission to pray, what is the limit of the expectations from prayer which we may legitimately entertain? What is social prayer? How is it to be organized so that it will be of compelling attraction and of real value? Is its operation entirely through the effect

upon mind, heart, and will of the declaration of Divine truth, or ought it not also to be through the excitation of devout emotion? And for this, is it healthy, is it spiritual to employ the aid of the external? What aids to worship should be used for the assistance of those who are not adult, who are not educated or who are not perfectly well? What are the true ends of worship? What is the "glory of God?" Has the time come when vocal or symbolic worship should be supplanted by concerted effort to control social situations?

Here is a bundle of questions chosen almost at random from a subject as yet almost entirely unexplored. I do not of course know how far the subject of the aspiring aspects of our human life appeal in interest to any who hear me. But at least there is no lack of difficult problems here to challenge the most patient research and sternest thought of any who wish to help their fellowmen. For the Church is almost helpless before the problems of her own worship. They have been declared under one aspect to be "insoluble." Yet they must be attacked, for organized religion has been, when corrupt, an instrument of incalculable evil, and unregulated worship has led to terrible excesses and abnormalities of life and conduct.

(3) And that fact connects us with the third fundamental function of the Church in the past. She has stood there, an institution among others, with her own rites, offices, officials, and ceremonial, as a witness for the reality of the spiritual; and her

sacraments have hinted that the commonest aspects of life are shot through with Divine meaning. But do we need this sacramental machinery any longer? Can we justify its maintenance among us? If we think we can, can we help to make it more efficient than it has been—purer and cleaner in its testimony? Can we increase its capacity for rebuke, securing some equivalent for what used to be called its discipline; and can we increase its capacity to encourage and comfort? There are a hundred questions here,—of ideal, of example, of organization,—which may well occupy and strain the highest powers of men.

It is no child's play, then, to take as one's vocation the assistance of the Church in the discharge of even three out of her many offices for humanity.

We are living in a time when the Church like other institutions seems very obviously in the grip of evolution; moving from one or many outworn forms to new forms suited to the new time. Shall we go to her assistance as she struggles toward new life, or shall we leave her and find the channel for our service elsewhere? There are some considerations here which no man of good will will neglect.

To begin with there is the matter of personal obligation. As a matter of fact, if today I have any window in my soul open to spiritual values and realities, that is because in the largest sense I am a son of the Church, heir of a body of aspiration more vast than my imagination can compass, the re-

sultant by a thousand channels which I cannot trace of the lives lived in fellowship with God by my predecessors in spiritual quest. I am not "the first that ever burst" into this sea of aspiration: the momentum of untold lives is behind me as I strive, and aspire, and pray. All this surely carries with it the obligation to practical gratitude. If I am deeply in debt to spiritual ancestors innumerable, whose strivings found form and expression for my soul's desires, who suffered their way into truth for me, is it not right that I should work for the continuance and the greater efficiency of the community of faith to which I owe so much? If on my own account I aspire to be religious, can I build a religious life upon ingratitude? And if, attracted by Jesus Christ I have taken thought to be a Christian, how can I be that and ignore this debt? For the whole idea of being a Christian is based on conscious debtorship, and the ideal Christian type is the conscious derivative type. I suppose there could be no better alternative name for the church than that of a Brotherhood of the Infinite Obligation, and it seems to me that if a man feels that at the heart of his own religion there is, not his own effort but his unpayable debt to the effort of God, his place is with those who with him feel that debt and acknowledge it.

A man, too, would do well to consider the reflex effect upon his own character and outlook of fellowship not only with living fellow-worshipers

but with the stream of religious feeling and action in the past which these fellow-worshipers represent and increase.

I do not hesitate to say that a man will be the better for the *reverence* for the patience of God and awe of the fullness of life in Him which this fellowship is calculated to induce. Which of us is there who has not known the uplift of a mood of reverence induced by the contemplation of ages of worship?

Off the west coast of Scotland lies a tiny island called Iona. Thither in the sixth century came S. Columba from Ireland, founding a little college of preachers whom he sent or took with him to evangelize my native land. The little abbey which he and his students built for worship has long since passed away, but there has always been a church there, pivoted, with whatever slight changes in orientation, on the same altar foundation whereat Columba worshipped and died. In my childhood, which was in part spent on the island, the Abbey Church was a ruin, and as a little lad I played in the ruins. Some years ago, the Abbey was restored for worship, and I was invited to be one of the first preachers in the renovated church. As I took my place at the little temporary pulpit beside the ancient altar base, and looked first at my congregation (composed in part of scientific men from England, in part of the aged fishermen whom I had known as stalwart lads) and then through the glassless windows at the burial place of sixty-

six of our Scottish and Norwegian kings and earls, whose bodies a thousand years ago had been brought there because of the sanctity of the holy isle, there swept over me (need you wonder?) an awe of the Eternal who had laboured so long within the aspirations of men. I kept repeating to myself "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation," that profound sentence whose implicates are unsearchable. What I preached that day is long ago forgotten, as is most meet; but I shall never forget what I *was* that day—consciously the child of the centuries and of the variegated grace of God which they carried. All petty provincialism was impossible: the broken altar base, the stern lift of the walls, the presence of the august dead, forbade. And this elevation of soul and broadening of view do come to the men who appreciate the presence of God in the community of faith.

And with the access of reverence comes a certain detachment of spirit, difficult otherwise to secure. For look you what the church is and conveys. It is the comment of Him who changes not on the changing panorama of our life. It is the voice of Eternity speaking of the events of time. I have said elsewhere that the spaces of history are appointed to be the medicine of our provincialism: still more is corporate communion with the eternal mind a remedy for our narrowness; a deliverance from feverish contemporaneity, from the tyranny of the voices and from the heaviness of the air, of

the passing day. No doubt a man may abuse this detachment and make it the servant of a chilling pride. But it need not be that. If a man have goodwill and love for his kind, this detachment of spirit will be only an instrument of service through the contribution of a quiet judgment and a mind centered in peace.

And finally, if only a man will think daily of the church, resolutely dwelling not on its denomination and the parochialisms of its organization but on its central idea, he will find his work in the world enriched by an indefeasible hope. Let a man look only with narrowed eyes, at the faults of the churches he sees, and he will fall into disgust or despair. But let him habituate his mind to the thought of the vast River of aspiration which has come down through the ages, and he will become certain of its ultimately issuing in the ocean of God's love. Our little denominational systems have their day and cease to be; and the man who thinks in terms of these systems or who is foolish enough to suppose that just at this punctual moment of time is truth fully understood and that just in the jargon of this hour it can alone be perfectly expressed — that man is cramped in outlook and impoverished in his store of hope.

But if a man flings back his thought to the beginnings of the human quest for God, and onward to that quest's fulfilment, domesticating in his mind the tremendous conception of the Body of Heavenly Desire implanted by God in

the heart of man, and offering himself to the service of that Body of Desire, he cannot fail to be buoyed up by deathless hope, and to be a minister of hope to others, carrying the sweet air of God's unfatigued eternity into the necessitous rooms of Time.

V

WHY AID IN THE WORLD MISSION OF JESUS?

The view of life which has been somewhat infelicitously called Christianity is a unique blend of the local and universal, the temporary and the eternal. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, and in the records there is nothing to indicate that in His intellectual life He repudiated his nationality. He had, it is true, what appears to have been an instinct for fastening upon general and generally applicable principles, and penetrating habitually to these through the details of particular cases. But, allowing for insights due doubtless to His stainless nature, His mind does not seem unduly to disown the influences, but moves within the categories, of the mind of His time.

And yet there was something about His attitude and point of view from the first potentially universal. Somewhere between the year 51 and 53, that is to say not more than 20 years after Jesus' death, His great interpreter, Paul, wrote "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," a charter of a religious internationalism which still stands unrevoked in Christian thought.

The seeds of this supernational way of thinking lay, as every one knows, in Judaism. At least as far back as the sixth century B.C. (when the Hebrew group in exile came effectively to realize the world outside their own little world) a conception of the range of operations and interests of God infinitely wider than that which the elder generations of Israel had held, arose and struggled with the narrownesses of the earlier nationalism. Much of the literature in the Old Testament preserves to us the record of the conflict between provincial and world-embracing points of view; indeed the difficulties which that literature presents to our understanding today are largely due to its representation, side by side, of these two tempers, the exclusive and the inclusive. In poetry (as in the Psalms and the later Isaianic songs) the universal triumphs often over the particular, the internationalist over the parochialist. There is nothing finer in the literary work of the human mind than the large hearted expectation of the patriot who had seen his country buffeted by the wars of empires to north and south of him — Egypt warring with Assyria and Assyria warring with Egypt across his own tiny land. "In the day of the Lord," he sings, "there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria, Assyrian passing into Egypt and Egyptian into Assyria: Egyptians and Assyrians alike shall worship the Eternal. Then shall Israel form a triple alliance with Egypt and Assyria — a blessing to the world around and blessed by the

Lord of hosts who said 'Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria whom I have made and Israel my own possession.'"

If passages like these be closely examined, it will be seen that there is much more in them than vapid and gaseous cosmopolitanism. There lies behind them, for one thing, a belief that the spreading of belief in a God of truth and mercy—of inflexible righteousness and invincible solicitude for men—will have a unifying effect among all persons holding that belief: a conception abundantly confirmed by the history of monotheism, even the defective monotheism of Islam. Further, when one reads closely, one sees that the hope of this universal harmony rests not only on the dominance of one view of God, but specifically on the theory of the providential purpose running through secular history. "Assyria" is "the work of God's hands," Egypt is "His people."

There was then at the heart of Judaism, lying below a surface which was often bitterly nationalistic, a faith in a unifiable world, resting on the rock of the belief in God and in the purposes of His righteous and loving will. That faith expressed itself through the political forms of thought with which the people were acquainted: there was to be a Kingdom of God, an everlasting Kingdom, a dominion which was to be "from sea to sea and from the River even to the end of the earth."

Now this majestic conception, perhaps by its very expression in political terms, laid itself open

to misconstruction and misuse. It is very hard for a man (or a people) to look out upon the world from a point of view that does not make himself and his interests the centre of the picture. Israel thus became, for many Hebrews, not only the centre but the dominating centre of the prospect of God's Kingdom. The pride of race which is universal among men had been in Israel swollen (undesignedly no doubt) by the work of the prophets in interpreting the nation's history as having at its heart special processes of self-revelation on the part of the Supreme. Many Hebrews came to feel, with great complacency, that their nation was the favorite of Heaven, and would be led by God to a throne of universal dominion over all others, vaguely known as Gentiles. The stupendous conception of a unification of the aspirations of humanity became thus the servant of a cheap political imperialism, and caricatured beyond recognition.

Nevertheless there were, here and there in Israel, persons whose dreams of a universal brotherhood of the worship of God had never allowed itself to fade in favor of the prospect of extension of the political power; and when Jesus of Nazareth came upon the scene, He found this idea of the universal Kingdom of God lying latent in the people's mind, and even vocal on the lips of persons like John the Baptist; and Jesus, in whose pure mind the idea lay absolutely unsullied, entered with joy on the work of proclaiming the

imminence of the Kingdom, saying its arrival awaited only the moral preparation of the people.

(It is well here to recall the fact that according to the testimony of very widely read persons, there is nothing in any religion of this world other than Christianity that corresponds to this conception of a Realm of God covering the whole earth.)

The universalism of Christianity, then, lay latent in its own background, and the idea of the Kingdom of God when it was seized upon by the young prophet of Nazareth and made the centre of His teaching, set forth upon a new and uninhibited career. "There is one thing," said Victor Hugo, "that is stronger than armies: an idea whose time has come." The "time" of the idea of the Kingdom of God came when it began to be expounded by, and illustrated in the career of, one whose heart was as world-embracing as the idea itself; who was Himself in some deep sense universal.

I say "in some deep sense:" for while there is no sort of doubt about the fact, it is very hard to define or describe accurately the fact of the so-called Universality of Christ. One sees clearly enough that there was a certain quality about His personality which made Him exceptional in the range of His interest. Bishop Westcott will have it that this spaciousness and impartiality of outlook rested on the unique endowment of Christ's full-orbed humanity. He overarches the sexes. "Whatever there is in man of strength, of justice, of

wisdom; whatever there is in woman of sensibility, of purity, of insight, is in Christ without the conditions which hinder among us the development of contrasted virtues in one person." Westcott points, too, to a certain note of timelessness in Jesus' mind. His words are not those of either ancient or modern. And as He overarches sex and period, so He overarches the races. It is doubtful whether scholars of today would be found willing to countersign this testimony of Westcott, for further critical study of the Gospels and their background seems to have brought into clearer outline the truly Jewish content of Jesus' teaching, and the influence upon Him of His national heritage, both intellectual and spiritual.

Yet, while the public waits for a final agreement on the part of scholars as to the precise meaning of the universality and of the title by which Jesus was earliest known and which He may have himself assumed, *viz.*, "Son of Man," that public—I mean the common Christian mind—feels that *somehow* Jesus was more than a national of a Roman province, that He represented "in some deep sense" humanity as such, at its best, in those things which are universally true of mankind. He literally was, is, the man within men, in that sense at least "Son of Man."

This feature of Him is further impressed on one by His transplantability. He has proved easily the most transplantable of religious leaders. Not even Buddha, and certainly not Muhammad, approaches

Him in this. He is reported to have said, "I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." The sentence may be the reflection of the Church's early faith in the triumph of His cause. But whether the church or Jesus Himself first said it, the prophecy is hardly an exaggeration. Some at least of every nation, tradition, culture, language, have felt a hidden affinity with Him, and He has caught them by the heart. The organizations of His idea have been sectional and provincial enough. There is no more fatuous provincialism on earth, for example, than the Roman Catholic Church, except the absurd nationalistic parochialisms of Protestantism. But this is only to say that the man, Christ Jesus, and His ideas have proved too big for the compass of the human mind, as it at present is educated and looks out on its world.

At the present day, for instance, we are witnessing the faint beginnings of the breaking through by the human mind from a stockade of nationalism (thought by many to be its ultimate frontier). In the presence of that beating of the wings of human aspiration against the walls which politics and pride have made their prison for so many centuries, many sneer, more are incredulous and despondent, a few hearts beat high with hope. What is certain is that if humanity does break through these nationalist borders and emerges into a wider place of liberty, we shall find Christ awaiting us there, moving Himself in consummate ease in that wider sphere and teaching us our first

steps as we try to walk in it. Verily, as Dr. Glover said in his already quoted estimate of Jesus, "there is more in Him than we have yet accounted for."

The career and the ethic of Jesus are no less weighted with the universal than is His person. As for the career, if you take its crises, the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Death, the Resurrection, and steadily contemplate them by themselves, you begin to see something of their representative and universally human quality; and meanings begin to dawn on you out of that obscure but profound remark of Pascal: "It is the lot of the Christian to have those things happen to him which happened to Jesus Christ." Confronting the great moments of Christ's career and translating them even if subarticulately into their spiritual equivalents among other men, we begin to see we are in the presence of something broadly, universally human.

And it is the same when you turn from His career to His ethic. That "love" of God and of one's fellow, into which He distilled the law of God is an ultimate, "either," as Canon Streeter says, "false or final." That it is not false is proved by His own incarnation of the love. Never surely had such love of men been shown by mortal man as Jesus showed; and after the drama of His life had well passed over, it was of this the people sang who had known Him best, "Unto Him who *loves us* and has loosed us from our sins . . . be glory." And when we open the earliest published Christian

document (the first epistle of S. Paul to the Thessalonians)—the first appearance of Jesus in literature—we find ourselves in the presence of a new type of solicitude on the writer's part for men, a solicitude quite obviously deriving itself from the solicitude of Jesus Christ Himself. In other words we see in operation the new force which He released, a love that knows no bounds nor frontiers, a love which will not be satisfied till all men know the God of love.

Here then, in this unique personality, career, and ethic is the source of the urge which drives the Christian faith across the world. It matters little whether the mandate "Go ye unto all the world and preach" has come directly from Jesus' lips or not. The words describe exactly the pressure which will not let the Christian Church be still nor let her sword sleep in her hand.

Now it is an open secret that this urge in Christianity is opposed by some of the strongest forces in human nature.

1. There is, to begin with, a provincialism native to the human mind which causes men instinctively to translate into a parochial *patois* any message that is of wide import; and when there exists, as there has for so many centuries existed in so many places, ignorance of the world beyond a narrow horizon, that provincialism of mind easily finds an ally in that ignorance; and a particular habit of thought is set up, hard to break down even when the facts regarding the

outer world at last begin to break through. Indeed what ensues when the outer world is first made known is fear, fear of the strange and unusual, and after fear, proved contempt. And when that pride comes in to buttress the parochial spirit, what room can there be for the desire to share a message of love? The proud spirit does not see that the parochialization of the message is annulment of the message; and so a caricature of Christianity is cherished as if it were the true Faith, wherever pride, of race or tradition, is unwilling to surrender itself.

2. The universalism of the Christian faith has been obscured and its progress hindered by the proud preoccupations of the official and institutional mind. The sublime idea at the heart of Christianity has of course necessarily been enshrined and embodied in institutions. As these have grown, officials have been set aside to care for them. The first interest of these officials tends to be the maintenance in integrity and stability of the institution they are set to guard. It is hard to say where exactly this loyalty to the institution ceases to be a virtue and becomes a stumbling block. But the fact is written broadly, not only on the history of the Christian faith but of other organizations embodying intangible ideas. At some obscure point the instrument has begun to be treated as the objective, the means as the end. And the moment this has begun, all kinds of self-deceiving motives cluster around to choke and

hamper anything like progress. Preoccupation of this sort, e.g., with the problems of organizing the thought and life of the churches of the Reformation, suppressed for a hundred years (as is well known) the missionary movement in Protestantism. The clamor of narrow loyalties, of sectarian self-assertion, is still heard loudly drowning out the challenge to sacrificial advance, and when missionary work has been engaged in, this spirit would fain make the results, as they are reported, the servant of sectarian or denominational self-aggrandisement. Every one who has interested himself in missionary work in parts of the earth which he has not personally visited knows the difficulty of visualizing with fairness the results of work in a given area, because each organization at work is apt to represent its own enterprise as the only beneficent agency operating in that region.

3. Standing too in the way of the world-wide advance of Christianity is the latitudinarian indifference which settles down upon the church, especially in times and places in which the church is at ease economically and politically. Members of the church, enjoying the varied benefits not only in the spiritual but in the material sphere of the view of life which the Christian faith promotes, become unable to specify in particular just what that benefit is, which is central to all and most critically important for the whole world to secure. They are content to rest in the midst of Christ's boons; but they become unable to communicate to others

their own gratitude because they cannot specify the boons in particular. One has only to think, e.g., of the vagueness with which our American "Christian" thought today surrounds such a word as "salvation," to see this point clearly. There is no felt urge to spread to others what one only vaguely apprehends oneself. And inasmuch as human life everywhere is slowly but surely moving from a lesser to a greater degree of comfort in material things, cruel exploitation of men—though God knows it still exists widely enough—becoming increasingly difficult, the impression grows in the professing church that the heathen world is well enough off as it is, and needs no intrusion of gospel preaching.

4. Once more, the infiltration into the public mind—when it is thus vague about its own Christian possessions—of second and third-hand ideas about the alleged truth in other religions, strengthens this indifference. The attitude is adopted, one can plainly see, in a misty state of mind both as to what Christianity is and what the other religions are. The position that the discovery of tremendous moral power in certain sanctions in use in what we call heathendom should only redouble our earnest desire to attach these sanctions to Christian teaching and to the person of our Lord, is impossible for many in the Church today.

5. And of course behind all this there is the definite hostility to Christian propaganda by those who, the more they see of the world are the

more unable to understand how sensible people can believe in the Christian "myth" and make it central in their view of the world's problems. Among these people, when their case is examined, there is nearly always discovered complete confusion as to what the Christian message and task essentially are, and why the obligation to make them effective should press upon reasonable minds.

It is essential, therefore, that we be clear about the nature of the task set before men by the incoming of Christ into the world, and that we worthily estimate the prospect of its fulfillment.

To begin with, it is important that we keep before us the fact that the task is spiritual, and that we appreciate what that means. The goal of the Church's task lies in the region of spirit,—of disposition, of motive. It is to produce a certain type of character, or group of types, whose central motive is love. "The aim of Christian discipline," said the author of I Timothy, "is the love that springs from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith."

It is of cardinal importance that the centrality of this aim be kept before our minds, platitudinous as the thought of it may at first sight appear. For, incalculable harm to the Christian cause has been done by substituting other aims excellent in themselves as the central or final aim, making ends what are no more than means. The worst of these substitutions is the substitution of the teaching of

dogma for the winning to love, the conversion of men to our opinions instead of their and our conversion to a loving heart and loving behavior.

Of course one does not mean that the story of the good news of the coming into the world of Jesus Christ is not to be told, and that interpretations of His person are not to be made. But these things are instruments reaching out to a result. The consciousness of this has made certain enlightened missionaries revolt passionately against the idea that they are in the mission field as vendors of opinion. "I am told," said the late Dr. Timothy Richard, "that I have come to China to 'convert' the Chinese. Convert them from what? From Confucianism? God forbid! For the main teachings of Confucianism are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, learning, and sincerity. What could the world do without these? From modern Buddhism? God forbid! For it teaches the vanity of what is material and temporal as compared with the spiritual and eternal; the need of repentance, faith in God, service for others and mercy. What could the world do without these? From Taoism? God forbid! For it teaches that men should have dominion over the forces of nature—material and spiritual. What could the world do without these? From Muhammadanism? God forbid! For it teaches that all men should turn from dead shams to the true God. What are we to do then? Follow our Lord's example; convert men from sin to

holiness, from darkness to light, from death to life, from hate to love!" The very touch of exaggeration in this brave and candid protest against the idea that at the heart of Christianity's crusade is the notion of competition in religions commends it to our hearts. The propagation of theological opinion may or may not be one of the good weapons in the Christian missionary's armory; but the end he is pushing on to is not a conquest of opinion but a conquest for the spirit of Love. To reach this end, he will endeavor first to commend himself to the acceptance of the people by his own resolute and unconquerable loving-kindness; then, in terms of love he will commend the Christ who has so greatly loved him, and the God from whom that Christ came. But always he is seeking for the manifestation of love among those to whom he has gone preaching the good news; when he finds these manifestations and sees the plant of love uprising—and not till then—will he be content to believe that he has begun to fulfill his task.

And what a task it is! What courage it needs! In detail, what daily, hourly conquest of self! "If you have in you," said Rabindranath Tagore to a young English curate eager to be a missionary, "if you have in you your pride of race, pride of sect and pride of personal superiority showing, then it is no use trying to do good to others. They will reject your gift or even if they accept it, they will not be morally benefited by it,—instances of

which can be seen in India every day . . . It is utterly degrading to accept any benefit but that which is offered in the spirit of love."

To live in forbearing, ministrant, invincible love daily, often among people provocative of the opposite emotions,—to live, further, so as to commend and mediate a higher love, the solicitous sacrificial love of God,—this is the task of the Christian agent.

If one follows out that task to its fulfillment, certain interesting paradoxes come into sight. For instance, such work as mediating the love of God that there may come to expression in men a spirit of love, can obviously be done only by dealing with individuals.

Each must be loved for himself, and each separately must be the object of respectful, intelligent, ministrant goodwill. Yet obviously this is only the beginning of the work. The hearts that have learned to love must, in the very exercise of that love, initiate a new social life, which begins to breathe alongside the existing social order, over which it must ultimately triumph or by which it must be crushed to death.

Hence the whole body of a people's social life, their customs and institutions and laws must, no less than the hearts of the individuals, be the care and study of the Christian agent. This involves the patient and sympathetic study of a system of social living which may be entirely alien to that in which he himself has been reared, with instruments of

discipline and standards and sanctions of conduct which he may find it very hard to understand and perhaps too easy to condemn.

The Christian agent then is not only a "worker in souls," but necessarily a student of social science. Even to reach the individual he must in many instances study patiently the social environment in which the individual soul exists, and in certain collectivist communities is half buried, and from which it is a terrific difficulty to detach himself. The missionary of the Evangel of Jesus must therefore be at once individualist and collectivist, dealing at once with men singly and in the mass.

And the moment he begins to study his people collectively, he has to begin to appraise their collective culture. His task is to bring the souls that have learned to love into an association controlled by that spirit of love. But how far is their existing culture fitted to persist into this new association? Must their social life and fabric be twisted into the forms with which the Christian agent is already familiar before it can be counted helpful to the cultivation of the spirit of love? To take a specific case, can an African in Africa become a Christian and remain an African? This problem of the maintenance of native culture under the control of Christian motive and aspiration is one of the most fascinating that can be presented to the mind of man; and no more adventurous or attractive career can be held before

a young man's eyes than a career which will involve the practical study of this problem, as it has to be studied not by missionaries alone whether theological or medical or educational or industrial, but by all administrators of Governments that have even slightly been affected by the Christian ideal, at least so far as to regard their work as a stewardship of resources both physical and spiritual for the benefit of the peoples entrusted to their charge.

It goes without saying that work of this kind, dealing with the individual as well as with the crowd, with the local as well as the universal, with the temporal as well as the eternal, is a work which necessarily must proceed slowly. I shall not here endeavor to estimate what has been accomplished or do more than hint at a small part of what remains to be accomplished. But I venture, before I release you, to mention four aspects of our life, four departments into which there is extraordinary need and opportunity for the Christian idea to penetrate.

1. There is the whole area of friendly relations between man and man. Do not be alarmed. I am not going to speak about war, about which, by a curious psychological lapse, this generation has talked too much. I am thinking rather of the temper which doubtless leads in nations to war but which has in individuals and groups dangerous manifestations that fall short of war. I refer to the temper that is quick to resent any invasion of

rights, is on a hair trigger in its readiness to claim what is due and to prove and press the claim: in short the litigious spirit. Do not misunderstand me. In a complicated civilization there will always be room for the lawyer, for reference to experts of differences of claim, of opinion, of interpretation as to what in a given case is just. I am thinking of the querulous spirit that hastens to vindicate its dues; that on the slightest interference threatens to sue, reaches for the pistol of legal pressure.

Now the early church was fairly warned about this temper by the Apostle Paul. "Now, therefore," he says, "there is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

One sees, of course, the amused smile which on the part of sophisticated persons like ourselves, greets the apostolic naïveté. Yet, S. Paul was speaking in the interest of the emancipation of his people from slavery to material things and to a tenacious hold on rights which menaced both the goodwill in the new community, and even strict integrity in themselves. And there is no denying that in many cases the church *ought* to be a reconciler. I know of a few cases where this work has been actually done: where by the kindly and wise action of the "church council," litigation between members of the church has been prevented not once nor twice but through at least a quarter of a century.

But such work is all too rare: and men have only to sit down and consider the matter to see that after the activity of the world's conscience has put an end to physical war, there still remains to be done a vast work upon the spirit of man, by a community of persons expert in spiritual matters, ere the impetuous resort to legal pressure be replaced by a spirit of patient and sacrificial conciliation, the spiritual value being preferred to the material profit.

2. In the second place, if there is work to be done in the region of harmonious living between man and man, there is an equally vast and still more delicate work to be done in the interest of harmony within the single human personality. Our feverish civilization is making us acquainted —to our infinite saddening—with the increase in what used to be baldly called lunacy, but now is known by a number of terms like maladjusted personality, disintegrated personality, and so forth.

Patient work, thank God, is being done over a vast area in this matter of the complex, physical and mental, of which we are made up; and one has recently heard the science of mental hygiene described as the queen of sciences. We are but at the beginning of the era of careful investigation in this region, and we are discovering that medical science too long neglected the influences of mind over body. The church—that is, the group of men and women concerned to make spiritual ideals

dominant in the world—must see that in the interest of the health (wholesomeness) of the whole personality of each person, her work must include an intelligent share in the entire art of healing. Many students of religious history regret the separation of the hospitals from the churches, which took place so widely at and after the Reformation. I do not know enough to know whether the separation for a time was not a necessity. It is certain, in any case, that both the churches and the hospitals have suffered in consequence; and it is only in our day that a real rapprochement has begun to be made; and even now, religious devotion and the contemplation of the arts are only beginning to be recognized as health restoring forces. I leave this matter abruptly there, only reminding you that no group has as much stake as has the Gospel-carrying church in the great ideal—"mens sana in corpore sano."

3. Again, the church has a vast and terrible task to perform in the region of industrial rearrangements. Her single interest here is in the depersonalization which our modern industrial system has inflicted on many industrial workers. It is a commonplace that we men are in danger of being crushed in war, for example, by the machines we have made. But the immediate point is that men are being made into machines: that the souls of men are being crushed by the forms of mechanical labour under which they groan. It is not that machinery is of the devil, and should be scrapped.

Nay, it is notorious that there are many areas where machines ought to be used, where what once were men and might be men again, are being used instead. "It is common knowledge among engineers and inventors the world over," an engineer has been recently telling us in the Hibbert Journal, "that there are literally hundreds and possibly even thousands of ingenious inventions which are being deliberately kept off the market." The same writer quotes President Wilson as saying to inventors: "The minute you apply for money or credit, this proposition is put to you by the banks, 'New inventions will interfere with the established processes and the market control of certain great industries. We are already financing these industries, their securities are in our hands' . . . If the trust doesn't want you to manufacture your invention you will not be allowed to, unless you have money of your own and are willing to risk it fighting the monopolistic trust with its vast resources."

There are, then, multitudes of men who are interested in keeping back the use of machinery, because it is less costly to employ mechanical human labour. Here is where the interest and duty of the church appear. Wherever a man is degraded and depersonalized by mechanical labour the church must intrude and fight. People speak of the tendency of physical science to depersonalize God, as a menace to the church's *theology;* but the tendency of modern industry to depersonalize

men is a menace to the church's very *life*. For the church is an organization of persons, by persons, for persons; completely integrated, completely victorious, completely holy, personality is alike its starting point and its goal; and whatsoever menaces personality strikes at its very life.

4. Then, finally, the church must relate itself to all knowledge, and there must be closer coöperation between church and university, between the assembly for worship and the organization for thought about God's world, and for its reconstruction in conditions which will be favorable to the development of the spirit of mutual goodwill, respectful, ministrant, loving.

There is no science, there is no department of technique which may not minister to this superb adventure. Could young men but see the magnitude and lure of the great task of recreating God's world in terms of love; could they be enabled to see it by the substitution for present isolations of joyous coöperation on the part of institutions of learning with institutions of worship; would not young men and women of goodwill leap to a share in the enterprise?

A recent writer in the Hibbert Journal, speaking of the salient features of our time, says tersely, "The day before yesterday — the Cathedral; yesterday — the Book; today — the machine; tomorrow? — no one may predict what man will choose for his chief delight." No, no one may predict; but one may guess. There will, I suppose, always be the

inert and pachydermatous mass who will seek the minimum of work and the maximum of acquisition, counting the world their debtor for an indolent and useless life. Thank God, there will be many others who will seek in action the salvation of their own souls. Liberated from the necessity to think of one profession as the narrow groove through which their activity must be squeezed if they would serve the Lord Christ,—emancipated from this, and seeing a clear road through their secular studies, in the physical sciences, in history, in the cultures of the world, to the service of the One Divine Love that made the world, and using us, will remake it,—they will go joyously into the work which once was professionally narrowed by the phrase "preaching Christ."

I think a great danger before our younger generation, confronted as they are with a universe so oppressively vast, is that they may be deterred from undertaking this big work of making the world a response to the Divine Love by a kind of pseudo-modesty, really a sort of fear masquerading as modesty, as who should say quoting Scripture piously: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Ah, but if it be not for ourselves but for the world we seek great things! "See," said Luther gathering into the counsel so much study of the Scripture and so much study of the life it illumines, "see that thou depart not from the faith that God willeth to do a great work by thee."

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